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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

'If we hold that the judgment of the Spirit makes itself felt through the consciousness of the Christian society, no book of the Bible is more completely recognized by universal consent as giving a Divine view of the Gospel, full of lessons for all time, than the Epistle to the Hebrews.'

1. So says Bishop Westcott. And what he says is true, whoever wrote the Epistle. We do not know who wrote it. The writer does not give his name (as it was customary to do at the beginning of a letter), nor does he say enough about himself to enable us to identify him. Not that he seeks to conceal himself; he is well known to his readers, and knows them well. But he is a modest man, full of his argument, full of the needs and the peril of those to whom he writes; and it does not occur to him to refer to himself more explicitly; nor has he any such official relation to the community addressed as would make this necessary. Hence his personality remains entirely in the shade.

In the Authorized and Revised Versions the title is 'The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews,' and that expresses the general opinion of the Church for many centuries. But the ascription of the Epistle to St Paul does not date earlier than the middle of the fourth century. Even then it was assigned to him, not so much for any critical reason as because it was supposed necessary to an epistle being counted canonical that it should be the work of some known apostle. There is doubtless something attractive in the thought that the great apostle of the Gentiles should for once have addressed those of his own nation who had turned to the Lord. And there is much in the Epistle which on the face of it seems to suggest St Paul—the prominence of 'faith'; the grasp of the relationship of the Law to the Gospel; the similarities of style, especially in the last chapter; the allusion to Timothy (xiii. 23); the Pauline blessing: 'Grace be with you all' (xiii. 25, cf. 2 Thess. iii. 17, 18). And yet that St Paul was not the author of the Epistle in its present shape has been constantly asserted in all periods of criticism, and is now regarded by most scholars as a practical certainty.

The style is not St Paul's. The mode of composition is not his. The position assumed by the writer is not his. When every allowance is made for difference of occasion and purpose, it does not seem possible that St Paul, who claims so constantly to have received the Gospel not from human teaching, but 'through revelation of Jesus Christ' (Gal. i. 12), could put himself, as the writer of this Epistle does (ii. 3, 4), by the side of those to whom he writes, as having learnt it, as they had done, from those who themselves had heard the Lord, and to whom it had been confirmed by miracle.

Many other names have been suggested, and arguments in favour of the suggestion have always been found—Barnabas, Apollos, Luke, Silas, even Peter and Philip the Deacon—but none of them has been accepted generally. 'Who wrote the Epistle,' said Origen, 'God only knows certainly.' And although he spoke of the actual amanuensis rather than of the original author, his saying is true of the author also. Lately the interesting suggestion has been made that the writer was Priscilla, and it has received some support; but the strongest argument in its favour, as it has been humorously said, is the 22nd verse of the last chapter: 'I have written unto you in few words.' Only a woman could have said that after writing a letter of thirteen chapters.

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2. Nor do we know for certain to whom the letter was written. A few scholars have recently asserted that the ascription 'To Hebrews,' found in the oldest manuscripts, is a mistake. That, however, is on every ground most unlikely. The Epistle is clearly enough addressed throughout to Jewish Christians. The whole argument, both in what it contains and in what it omits, bears witness to its purpose. The great surrounding Gentile world is out of sight; and with it all the questions which arose from the union in one Church of Jews and Gentiles. There is some ground for the belief that it was addressed to a 'House-Church' in Rome; but on the whole the most probable opinion still is that the recipients were the Church in Jerusalem—a Church which during the first century was composed entirely, as no other Church could have been, of converts from Judaism.

3. The danger to which the readers are exposed is that of falling away from Christianity. So far, they still remain within the Church, are 'holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling,' confess Jesus as Apostle and High Priest (iii. 1); they still show their love to God's name in ministering to the saints, and thus justify the author's belief in their ultimate salvation (vi. 9, 10); they are not of those who shrink back, but of them that have faith (x. 39), and the writer can still earnestly desire their prayers (xiii. 18) and co-operation in the task of strengthening the weak and wavering (xii. 12, 13). But they are nevertheless in serious peril of falling away, so serious that the author, while he expects to see them soon, does not wait for this, but writes at once.

His chief concern is to arouse his readers to their old-time faith and zeal, to impart renewed courage, and to warn them against the danger of backsliding and apostasy. With this end in view, he undertakes to exhibit the superlative glory of Christ's person and work, in order, on the one hand, to kindle their pride in, and enthusiasm for, their Christian faith, and to convince them that the greatest sacrifices and the worst sufferings ought to be looked upon as a small price to pay for the supreme blessings which Christ had secured for His followers; and, on the other hand, to impress them with the awful consequences of denying such a Christ and repudiating such a salvation.

But the peril of apostasy under the stress of persecution is not all that threatens the congregation. Some of its members are Christians of some years' standing, old enough to be teachers, but actually immature (v. 12). These persons need to be aroused to press on unto perfection (vi. 1). The fact seems to be that the writer is apprehensive that his readers, or some of them, will fall into indifference as to Christian faith, not because of stress of persecution, but through the lapse of time, and the wearing out of their first enthusiasm. The peril of indifference would grow more and more serious as time went on and the last individuals of Jesus' own generation disappeared, without His coming again in the glorious manner so keenly anticipated through the first years of the life of the Church. For these and other reasons, sluggishness and indifference were creeping into the Church, and a stirring declaration of the folly and the peril of such decline was urgently demanded.

4. The author has a very clear idea of the nature, and a very high estimate of the value, of Christianity. This is the ground upon which he bases his exhortation and his warning. He attaches to it the value of the perfect and therefore the final religion, and he assigns to it this value because he regards it as the religion of *free, unrestricted access to God*.

But he also sees clearly that Christ is the key to Christianity, and that, in order to understand it, we must understand Him. The superiority of Christianity to Judaism, which it is his aim to establish, lies in the unique pre-eminence of Christ and in the consequent perfection and finality of His work. To that, as the essential theme of this Epistle, we are introduced in its opening sentence.

5. Thus the Epistle, on its way to recall its readers, at a crisis of confusion and temptation, to certainty, patience, and peace, leads them—not last but first—to Jesus Christ. At once it unfolds to them His glories of Person, His wonder of Work and Love. It does not elaborately travel up to Him through general considerations. It sets out from Him. It makes Him the base and reason for all it has to say—and it has to say many things. Its first theme is not the Community, but the Lord; not Church principles, not that great duty of cohesion about which it will speak, and speak urgently, farther on, but the Lord, in His adorable personal greatness, in His unique and all-wonderful personal achievement. To that attitude of thought it recurs again and again in its later stages. In one way or another it is always bidding us look up from even the greatest related subjects and 'consider Him.'

Steps in Revelation.

Heb. i. 1.—'At sundry times and in divers manners.'

To mankind God has been revealing Himself from the beginning by divers portions and in divers manners, and by slow steps has mankind accepted the portions and discerned the manners, and discovered God. Let us direct our attention to two groups of ideas about God which men have worked out for themselves in more or less successive stages, and then let us glance forward to a third stage and a third group that remain.

1. In the first stage, broadly speaking, men had to learn the lesson of God's *power*. He reigned supreme first of all in the tribe, then in the nation, and then in all the earth. They were helped to learn it by the analogy of their own rulers, and those were the days of autocracy. It seemed natural to them that one man should have supreme power over groups and masses of their fellow-men. A patriarch or a king controlled the lives of his family or his subjects. They were placed in his hands. His slightest wish must be obeyed. He could do exactly as he pleased. It was theirs to submit to his will. Thus when men considered the Ruler of all the world they tended to think of Him as one of their own potentates, infinitely greater, but with the same irresponsible power.

2. But even among the men of old time the analogy was corrected. Side by side with the revelation of God's power ran the revealing of His *love*. Prophets spoke of God as a husband waiting upon His people, as a father yearning for His children's affection. Psalmists sang of God as a shepherd, as a friend. All this growing conviction about God Jesus took hold of and transferred to it the whole emphasis of His teaching. It was as though mankind had learned that God had power; now they must learn of His love. And again we see the relation with human politics. He points to Himself. 'Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.' There He spoke of the rulers of men. Our great ones in Church and State are they that bear the heaviest burdens because they serve. And thus, as the Western conception of leadership replaced the autocracies of the East, the discovery of God the Son working with His children and suffering their pains reacted on human government and made it a nobler thing.

3. But that is not enough. We know that it is not. God the Father and God the Son are still outside mankind. Christ after He died was still external. So He came again and dwelt among us, but within. 'If we love one another, God dwelleth in us.' 'Ye are the temple of the living God,' even as God said, 'I will dwell in them.' From the Father and the Son proceed the Holy Spirit—*God within us*. It remains for us to recognize Him there. How many are our opportunities. Every experience that each of us has of a common life, of corporate life, which means a larger life, will help here. 'Have you never felt,' says Hugh Walpole in his story called *The Secret City*, 'when you have been struck with the charm of some group of persons, that you were being employed as a part of the figure that without you would be incomplete? The figure for an instant remains gigantic, splendid, towering above mankind as a symbol of warning, of judgment, of threat. Dimly you recognize that you play some part in the creation of that figure, and that, living for a moment in some force outside your individuality, you have yet expressed that same individuality more nobly than in any recess in which your own poor lowly figure could have fallen. You have been used, and now you are alone again. You were caught up and united to your fellow-men. God appeared to you, not as you expected, in a vision cut off from the rest of the world, but in the revelation that you share and that is revealed only because you were united to others, and yet your individuality was still there, strengthened, heightened, purified.' That is the experience of all who have ever risen above themselves to some larger life, and our social world to-day is rich in larger life.

Take some examples from history:—

St Augustine now and then speaks of Christ as an *indwelling Spirit*, whose presence is a law of living power in the converted soul. In a passionate apostrophe to Christ he says, 'O Christ Jesus, my helper and redeemer! How sweet did it suddenly become to me to cast away the sweets of folly. . . . For Thou didst cast them from me, O true and sovereign sweetness, and didst Thyself enter in in

their stead. . . . So was my mind free from the fretting anxieties of ambition or gain and from prurient desires; and I prattled (*garriebam*) like a child to Thee, my light, my riches, my salvation, my Lord God' (9. 1. 1). This sentence may be compared with a passage in Ambrose's commentary on the Psalms: 'Let Christ enter thy soul; let Jesus dwell in your minds. . . What advantage is it to me, conscious of such heinous sins, if the Lord comes, unless He comes into my soul, returns into my mind; unless Christ lives in me?'[1]

Turn to Madame Guyon: 'Great was the change which I had now experienced; but still, in my exterior life, I appeared to others quite simple, unobtrusive, and common. And the reason was, that my soul was not only brought into harmony with itself and with God, but with God's providences. In the exercise of faith and love, I endured and performed whatever came in God's providence, in submission, in thankfulness, and silence. I was now in God and God in me; and where God is, there is as much simplicity as power. And what I did was done in such simplicity and childlikeness of spirit, that the world did not observe anything which was much calculated to attract notice.'[2]

Listen to Maurice: 'The confidence of a power always at work within us, manifesting itself in our powerlessness, a love filling up our lovelessness, a wisdom surmounting our folly, the knowledge of our right to glory in this love, power, and wisdom, the certainty that we can do all righteous acts by submitting to this Righteous Being, and that we do them best when we walk in a line chosen for us, and not of our choosing—this is the strength surely, and nothing else, which carries us through earth and lifts us to heaven.'[3]

Later still, Dr. R. C. Moberly: 'It is not by becoming like Him that men will approach towards incorporation with Him: but by result of incorporation with Him, received in faith as a gift, and in faith adored, *and used*, that they will become like Him. It is by the imparted gift, itself far more than natural, of literal membership in Him; by the indwelling presence, the gradually disciplining and dominating influence, of His Spirit, which is His very Self within, and as the inmost breath of our most secret being; that the power of His atoning life and death, which is the power of divinely victorious holiness, can grow to be the very deepest reality of ourselves.'

O! meanest, poorest and most black with sin
My house of clay,
Yet God comes in
And craves a dwelling there where He may stay.

And since that Presence so august and sweet
Here takes His ease,
Not on my feet
I move about my house, but on my knees.

And now with tears and prayers my whole concern
Is to make white
The place where burn
Those fires of love, mysterious, infinite.

O! God the Comforter, my nothingness
Is all my cry;
Make fair and bless
My house of dust for Heaven's high Majesty.[4]

Thus still in divers manners are we made aware that God is teaching us all things and leading us to perfect knowledge of Himself, which is eternal life. And we whose desire is one for the building of His body in all the world, we, of all men, must diligently seek the knowledge of God who dwelleth in man. This knowledge of God within, let us study it among ourselves. If we were fully aware of God within our fellow-Christians, would our differences loom so large? There are diversities of gifts and diversities of working and diversities of interpretation, but the same spirit and the same Lord. Let us study it among those to whom we are sent, not only as men to whom God made a claim for Himself, not only as men for whom Christ died to draw us to Himself, but also as men whom God desires as His dwelling-place. Into them He has breathed the breath of life, and He waits to live a more abundant life in them when they shall live to Him. Let us study it in His dealings with them. Even now we see the Holy Spirit moving as He listeth. From man to man in mighty multitudes our eyes have seen that promised coming, 'I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.' And lastly, let us study it with awe and reverence in the mind of God Himself. It is not enough for Him to reign supreme in all the earth. It is not enough for Him to lead His hosts of soldiers and servants. He cannot be satisfied until in power and love He is alive and active in the whole mass of mankind.

[1] R. L. Ottley, *Studies in the Confessions of St Augustine*, 75.
[2] T. C. Upham, *The Life of Madame Guyon*, 129.
[3] *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, i. 246.
[4] Dorothy Frances Gurney, *A Little Book of Quiet*, 83.

The Prophet.

Heb. i. 1.—'By the prophets.'

A PROPHET, in Scriptural language, is not necessarily a predictor: some were so and some were not: but the title implies rather a forthteller: a prophet is one, not who divines, not who sees into futurity by some part or gift of his own, but who utters in God's behalf a message which God first communicates for this purpose to him. Such was the method of revelation under the Old Dispensation. It was occasional. It was fragmentary. It was various in mode and form. It was always made through human utterers.

The prophet in the Old Testament is in a peculiar sense the organ of Jehovah's will. He has listened in the council of the Almighty; he has stood, in vision, in the presence-chamber of the Most High, and heard there words which thrilled through his inmost being; he has felt within him the impulse, before which he quailed as at the lion's roar, or which consumed his bones as a hidden fire; he knows that Jehovah 'will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets'; ever and anon, as he speaks, it is 'Thus saith Jehovah,' 'Hear ye the word of Jehovah,' ''Tis the oracle of Jehovah.' If there are degrees of inspiration, the highest degree must surely be sought in those who thus constantly and unwaveringly declare the plenitude of their inspiration, and claim to bring directly to men the message of the Most High.

1. But the prophets did not always receive this message through the same activity of their mental organism. Sometimes they became conscious of it in a vision; more frequently, as it would seem, by an impulse or direction given to their waking thoughts, or by a quickening of their natural faculties of intuition or reflection.

And their message, when received, was communicated to men in many different forms. Sometimes it was expressed in plain, direct language; sometimes it was made palpable in a significant act; more often it was clothed by the prophet's imagination in the gorgeous dress of poetic symbolism. In genius and character the individual prophets differ widely: but they all possess, in a rare degree, the power of presenting their thought in an attractive literary garb. The flowing periods of Amos, the condensed vehemence of Hosea, the majestic oratory of Isaiah, the artless pathos of Jeremiah, the studied pictures of Ezekiel, the warm and impassioned eloquence of the great prophet of the Exile—all, in different ways, while they reflect the diversified individuality of their authors, at the same time excite profoundly the reader's interest and attention.

2. Nor are the topics with which the prophets deal less varied than their styles. The prophets come to the forefront in many capacities. They move with the times, and are the representatives of the best thought and of the best culture which the Israelitish nation could produce. Politically, they are their nation's truest counsellors at the critical moments of its history. In earlier times they are influential in setting up or dethroning dynasties: at a later time they stand beside the king to admonish or advise. They saw more clearly than their contemporaries, as the result repeatedly showed, the bearing upon Israel of the movements and tendencies operative about them: they interpreted beforehand the signs of the times, and warned their countrymen how to face the future. With what clear insight do Amos and Hosea detect the germs of dissolution in the fabric of the Northern Kingdom! How confidently and how unerringly does Isaiah declare, first the failure of Syria and Ephraim, then the failure of those more formidable aggressors, the Assyrians, in their projects for the ruin of Judah! With what a just instinct does he plant his finger upon the hollowness of Egyptian promises! And how truly, a century afterwards, does Jeremiah, apparently in direct antagonism to the line pursued by his great predecessor, foresee the success of the Chaldæans, and divine the purpose of Providence to crown Nebuchadnezzar as the monarch of Western Asia! And yet another prophet, still in advance of his contemporaries, when the appointed term of the Babylonian empire was approaching, heralded the advent of the conquerer who was to overthrow it, sustained with glowing promises the failing spirits of his countrymen, and sketched in grand, imposing outline his nation's future destiny. From the time of Moses onwards, at every important epoch in the history of Israel, it was a prophet who assumed the place of authority, and taught his people the duty which the age required of it.

3. But the prophets were more than political counsellors: they were the chief upholders of morality and religion. Not only did they uphold generally,

in accents of solemn earnestness which can never lose their spell, the claims of righteousness, philanthropy, equity, and other social virtues—so apt in all countries, but especially in Eastern countries, to be disregarded—and the claims of Jehovah as against other gods whose worship possessed often such a strange attractiveness for the less spiritually minded Israelites; but they taught also many special lessons.

Amos teaches the impartiality with which God views all nations, and shows that He demands of Israel precisely the same standard of equity and right that He exacts of other nations. Hosea, the prophet of religious emotion, teaches the love with which Jehovah regards Israel, and while reproaching Israel for the imperfect manner in which His love was requited by her, deduces the lesson that the individual Israelite who seeks to participate in God's love must show love, on his own part, to his brother man. Isaiah, in imagery of which he alone is master, sets forth the majesty of Jehovah's Godhead, declares the triumph of righteousness and true religion in the overthrow of the Assyrian, and holds up before his nation the inspiring ideals of a renovated human nature, a purified and transformed society. Ezekiel, while watching from his distant exile's home the toils closing around Jerusalem, asserts, in uncompromising stringency, the doctrine of individual responsibility, and vindicates—though in a very different manner from Isaiah—the majesty of Jehovah, which might seem to have been disparaged by the disastrous ruin of the city of His choice. And the prophet who heralds the advent of Cyrus, preaches, in language more exalted and impressive than is to be found in any other part of the Bible, the transcendence, the omnipotence, the infinitude of Israel's God, His incomparable and incommunicable Being, and withal His purposes of salvation, which, though they are directed with special affection towards Israel, comprehend within their ultimate scope all the kindreds of the earth. In the approaching restoration of the exiled nation, he sees, what Ezekiel did not see, an event of crucial significance in the history of the world, and one adapted in the end to create a revolution in the religious feelings of mankind.

In the case of every prophet, the message, which it is distinctively his to bring, is correlated partly with his individual character and genius, partly with the circumstances and history of his age. And thus in many parts and in many modes did God speak to the fathers in the prophets.

The Prophetic Insight.

Heb. i. 1.—'God . . . at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets.'

THE source of the prophetic insight is no less than God Himself. The channels through which that insight comes are two—the direct, through mystical personal experience; the indirect, through history or the collective experience of the race.

God is the source from which all men and all things have arisen. God is the destiny to which all men and all things are to return on a higher plane. Meanwhile men have to fight their way along the arduous and perilous spiral of existence, and need guidance and help in so doing. There are six great ideas, together embodying a complete synthesis of religious and ethical factors, which the prophetic movement as a whole has contributed to the understanding of the problem of existence.

¶ The prophetic quest for truth, for reality, for God, does not employ the mechanism of formal logic. It seeks to attain its object by means of 'vision,' or the direct inner beholding of reality. In the modern phrase its method is that of intuition or immediate insight. Instead of using the syllogism which creeps in the direction of truth by a zigzag process, its method is to employ the direct approach to truth. The resultant experience enables the prophet to declare: 'The word of the Lord came unto me, saying.' This sounds very ancient and naïve, but it is given a modern standing among sophisticated philosophies by the work of Bergson and James. It is more than an accident that the modern philosopher of intuition should be a descendant of the ancient Hebrews. He has given a complete philosophical warrant to the method employed by the ancient prophets in their grasping of ultimate reality by exalting the method of 'intuition,' the philosophical complement of the theological 'inspiration,' in showing its superiority to the Greek logic as the proper instrument of speculation. William James has done an equal service in attaching a claim for the validity of religious experience as a source of the knowledge of reality. Nowhere can we get a clearer appreciation of the value of spiritual intuition than in the study of the permanent combined results of the prophets of Israel and the teachings of Jesus.

1. The prophet discovered the value of the individual. The prophet not only finds God, but in

so doing first truly finds himself. As he learns to know God he also learns that God already knows him as a separate personality, not merely as a fragment of the nation. His 'prophetic call' is the discovery that God needs him as the messenger of His will to His people. The consequent dependence of God upon an individual as an agent of His working plan gives to the individual a supreme value. On making the discovery the prophet is at once humbled and transported. He knows his past limitations, but, in spite of them, he expands with the consciousness of potential greatness. God's need of him makes the prophet great.

2. But the prophet's work cannot be carried out in isolation. His primary task is to reproduce his own type among the people, who must be brought equally to the realization that prophetic responsibilities await them all—that is, that all are called to assume a share in establishing the Divine community. God needs all men and so all men acquire an equal value with the original prophet. They are called upon to repent—not merely to regret the past, but radically to remodel their lives on the plan of God's will for the realization of the righteous state. When the state is thus realized in righteousness it exists for God, but at the same time it also exists for the benefit of its lowliest and weakest member. The importance of the community is not relatively lessened because of the supreme value given to the individual. On the contrary, the value of the community is raised to the highest point because in it alone can the individual find his task and thus come to complete self-realization. Salvation for the individual consists in seeking the salvation of the whole community.

3. But a righteous society or state cannot exist in isolation in the midst of a godless world, any more than the righteous individual can be in safety in the midst of a wicked social order. The earlier tribal religion held that Jehovah's chosen people could exist in safety, though surrounded by strong nations who cared nothing for Jehovah's will. The prophets came to see clearly that the nations who 'knew not Jehovah' were both a corrupting influence and an external menace. God's plan for the Israelites could not work out except as it included the heathen peoples in its scope. In the eyes of the popular religion it was the destiny of the heathen to be held in a state of complete subjugation by the 'chosen people.' But the prophets had a more religious and ethical solution. The great nations must also be won to allegiance to Jehovah and His will, for their own sakes as well as for the sake of Israel. Israel and all the other nations exist for that future community organized according to the will of God and including all mankind.

4. This means for Israel the discipline of suffering. The priests fostered the idea that by means of the national cult with its offerings and sacrifices Jehovah would be led miraculously to protect His favourites from the invasion and conquest overtaking other smaller peoples. The prophets denounced this as vain and superstitious folly. In opposition to the priests they declared that the nation was not fulfilling the pleasure of Jehovah. It could not do so because it was not aware of His plan. It could be awakened only by some terrible lesson, and Jehovah was able to teach that lesson by the punitive power of the great conquering nations under His control. When at length Israel should have truly learned its lesson then it would become the world-teacher. Universal peace and a league of all nations knowing Jehovah and fulfilling His will would come as the culminating achievement. In this universal community of God the individual would find his complete well-being and enduring safety.

In no respect does the prophetic religion throw a clearer light upon the dark mystery of existence than in the profound insight into the Divine mission of suffering.

(1) Hosea learns from the anguish of his soul in dealing with an adulterous wife what God's attitude is toward His faithless people. He also learns from his insight into God's dealing with Israel how he should conduct himself towards his wife, whom he loyally persists in loving despite her treachery to himself. Instead of inflicting upon her the penalty of the law, instead of hardening his heart to the point of hating her, he forgives her, woos and wins her back to the ways of decency and honour, and becomes the redeemer of his wife, as Jehovah is the redeemer of Israel. The adulterous wife and the adulterous nation must suffer, but their suffering is essential to their restoration and comes from a lover (human in one case, Divine in the other) who does not punish because of the bitter resentment of his soul, but

because of his redeeming love overcoming the feeling of resentment.

(2) But even more striking is the fact that the prophet's own attitude towards his people comes to be exactly the same as Jehovah's attitude. The prophet is a penitent. He has been a sinner, but he has sought God and received forgiveness and purification. He is in an attitude not of rebellion but of obedience. It does not occur to him to seek to save his own soul by separating himself from his people and so to escape the calamities that have fallen upon them. He shares their fate while trying to save them from it. He suffers with them though he deserves no punishment. Nay, in working for their good he incurs their ill will and hatred. Speaking the truth to them in love he is hewn in sunder by the sword which they turn against him in their anger. He dies for love of them—seeking not his own reward. The prophet's life, not merely his work, becomes a theodicy.

5. Underlying and inseparable from the development of ethical universalism with its doctrine of service is the growing consciousness of the unity of God—theological monotheism. As Marti says: 'One might transcribe every page of the prophets of the eighth century. They contain a unanimous testimony to the sole, unlimited, and irresistible power of Jehovah, and they are at the same time a proof that in its essence monotheism existed from the very first and the earliest prophets.'

It is important to remember the connection between monotheism and ethical universalism. The prophets could not separate their doctrine of the One God from the doctrine of the solidarity of mankind. The priestly writers were inconsistent when they took over the prophetic doctrine of monotheism while rejecting the prophetic ethical universalism. They held to the ridiculous and presumptuous views that the One Omnipotent God remained interested in the Jewish race alone. This narrow conception is satirized by a Jewish writer of the Hellenistic period in the Book of Jonah.

Jonah is made ridiculous by his attempts to escape from the territory of Jehovah, by his chagrin at God's mercy to the Ninevites after their repentance, and by his caring more about the fate of a gourd vine than for the fate of a great city. The work seems almost to strike a note of levity at the expense of the tribal idea of God, but the Book receives a great weight of seriousness from the approving use made of it by our Lord. We must remember that humour was one of the prophetic weapons which Jesus Himself did not hesitate to employ even in dealing with the most serious matters.

6. Because of his knowledge of God's power and love, the prophet knows how the future will ultimately unfold. He can foresee but one ending to the drama of life—a happy one. The tragic estrangement between God and humanity will yet be done away, and there will be an eternal reconciliation. However long the tragic episode may be drawn out by human perversity, the end will be, in the phrase of Dante, a *Divina Commedia.*

There is to be a universal human brotherhood, founded upon mutual love and service and upon the immediate knowledge of God and guidance by Him. Through what agency is this golden age, this reign of God on earth, to be accomplished?

(1) In the times of Israel's oppression a deliverer was anxiously looked for. Who and what should the leader be? All answers agreed 'an anointed one'—in the Hebrew, 'a Messiah,' that is, one specially consecrated to the office or task. There were three kinds of Messiahs or 'anointed ones'—kings, priests, and prophets. It is a strange fact that Christian theology has almost exclusively identified the word 'Messiah' with kingship. The popular imperialistic idea of the Jews was doubtless at one time that the Messiah should be a conquering king who would deliver Israel from its enemies, extend the kingdom into an empire, and establish the inner well-being of the people. Isaiah and Jeremiah looked forward at times to a righteous king who would carry out their programme of social justice. But apart from a few passages in the writings of these two prophets and allusions by Haggai and Zechariah to contemporary Davidic princes, the monarchical idea of Messiahship is not common in the Old Testament. It finds a most interesting illustration in those passages of the prophecy of the Great Unknown wherein he hails Cyrus the Persian as Jehovah's Messiah. This is because in his universalism the prophet believed that the emperor was an agent of Jehovah in rehabilitating the Jewish people.

(2) In Deutero-Isaiah we find the conception that the coming deliverer is not a king but a suffering

prophet. The prophet is to accomplish the stupendous task through moral leadership and religious instruction. This type of Messianic idea is the most ethical, the most rational and exalted. In place of the leadership of a political king or priestly theocracy it puts that of the God-knower as that which is to bring in the consummation of the world drama. This is the prophetic interpretation of the Messianic idea, and it was in this sense that Jesus must have conceived of His own Messiahship. It is the highest religious and moral conception possible. The goal of humanity is to be reached, not through conquest (as in the kingly Messianic idea), but through divinely guided moral leadership, effected through suffering service, establishing the universal community—the reign of God.

The Son.

Heb. i. 2.—'By his Son.'

THE writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares to his readers that the same God who had spoken 'to their fathers by the prophets' has now spoken unto them by *His Son*. The fact, equally certain, is far more momentous, far more astonishing. The writer is fully conscious that such is the case, and that it must be felt to be so.

How shall he meet the prejudice which his declaration cannot fail to encounter on the part of those who still feel as, he remembers, he himself once felt? First he anticipates the inquiry which he supposes them to be prepared to make, 'Who is this Son of God?' We know who the prophets were, by whom God spake to our fathers. We know who Moses was. We know who David was. We know who Isaiah, Daniel, and their brethren were. Well, then, it is these very men, it is David, it is Isaiah, who shall give you the answer you desire. And so he proceeds to quote from those same prophets not less than eight or nine passages in which they speak of the promised Messiah as superior not only to men like themselves, but to the holy angels; and *so* superior as to be their Lord and Maker, and the Maker and the Lord of all things that exist. Moreover, the writer of this Epistle, himself inspired, describes the nature and the office of the Divine Person of whom he speaks; and this he does (in the words which immediately succeed the text) in terms at once so full and so concise that they leave nothing to be desired. As though he would say: Do you ask, Who is this Son of God?—He is one whom God 'hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.'

1. These words declare first what *He is in Himself*. In Himself, He is the Son of God, in a proper and exclusive sense, as 'being the brightness (or effulgence) of his glory, and the express image of his person,' or substance. Here the writer makes use of two figurative terms in order to convey what no one term would be adequate to express, viz. the *peculiarity* and the *excellency* of our Lord's Divinity. He had spoken of Him as 'Son of God.' This implies identity of nature; but inasmuch as Sonship, in all other cases, involves posteriority in order of birth, this notion is corrected and the co-eternity of His existence indicated by the idea of light, or 'brightness,' which instantly coexists with the body from which it is derived. Again, the idea of brightness, emanating from a body of light, conveys the notion of inequality; but this notion is corrected, and coequality of the Son is vindicated by the idea of an image or impression, which is always precisely coextensive with the stamp or die from which it is produced. Thus, to borrow the words of the Nicene Creed, He is 'God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God'; having both the glory of God and the substance of God; and the proof that He is so is contained in the fact that He did and does what no other but God could do or can do. Acting for and with His Father, He 'made the worlds,' or, as the Creed again expresses it, 'by him all things were made'; and still He preserves and regulates them—He 'upholds all things by the word of his power.'

2. But we are also told in that same passage what *He is to us*. As the Son, the only begotten Son of God, He was born heir of all things. But as the Son of Man He has been also 'made' or appointed heir, as the reward of His voluntary humiliation, and of the obedience by which He was content to suffer, even unto death. His inheritance, therefore, is held by a double title, both Divine and human; and in virtue of His human title, He has made us, as the adopted sons of God, also His own fellow-heirs.

But how? And when? Not till He had 'by himself purged our sins.' 'By himself,' that is, by the shedding of His own, truly human, blood, 'as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.' By the which blood, applied to us in the Word, and in the Sacraments of His Church, we are sanctified and made meet who otherwise on account of the pollution of our sins would have been most unmeet—made meet to be partakers of the inheritance He has obtained for us. To mark more clearly this great distinction which the Scripture teaches us to observe in regard to the twofold nature of Christ: as 'the Son of God,' He is ever, and has been from all eternity, 'in the bosom of the Father.' As 'the Son of Man,' He has a place, which He holds not for His own sake but for ours; that He may make us 'sit with him in the heavenly places,' that 'where he is, there we may be also.' And here is the sum of what He is to us · As our Prophet He speaks to us from God, as our Priest He purges us from our sins, as our King He has ascended up on high, and sits, far above principality and power, at the right hand of God. And thus, by faith and love in regard to what is past and present, and by hope in regard to what is yet to come, He is ours. By the sins from which He has released us, and by the throne of which He has assured to us the possession, He is ours. 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.'

The Angels and God.

Heb. i. 6.—'The angels of God.'

The text suggests to us the subject of angelic life. It is a subject brimful of interest. For so much eager speculation has clustered round it that it cannot be devoid of some attraction to intelligent men; so much art and poetry have adorned it, so much religious life has mingled with it, that men whether of poetic temperament or of spiritual mind can scarcely put it aside with indifference.

It is true there are many who deny the existence of any spiritual beings save God and man. The wide universe is to them a solitary land without inhabitants. There is but one oasis filled with living creatures. It is the earth on which we move; and we who have from century to century crawled from birth to death, and fretted out our little lives upon this speck of star-dust which sparkles amid a million million others upon the mighty plain of infinite space—we are the only living spirits. There is something pitiable in this impertinence. It is a drop of dew in the lonely cup of a gentian, which imagines itself to be all the water in the universe. It is the summer midge, which has never left its forest pool, dreaming that it and its companions are the only living creatures in earth or air.

There is no proof of the existence of other beings than ourselves, but there is also no proof of the contrary. Apart from revelation, we can think about the subject as we please. But it does seem incredible that we alone should represent in the universe the image of God; and if in one solitary star another race of beings dwell, if we concede the existence of a single spirit other than ourselves, we have allowed the principle; the angelic world of which the Bible speaks is possible to faith.

In the text the angels are God's angels. Let us consider them in their relation to God in two ways.

1. Take, first, the relation of God to angelic life.

(1) The first thing we understand of the angels is that in distant eternities God created them. God gave of His own life to others, and filled His silence with living souls. Here we have the principle of the social life of God. We are too apt to picture Him as dwelling in solitary magnificence, like some Oriental king, unapproachable, self-sufficing, careless of the social life so dear to us, finding no pleasure in the love and praise of His children. Long before man arose, the creation of angels denies this imagination. God did not wish to live alone. He gave Himself to others, and rejoiced in seeing Himself reflected even partially by others. He listened with pleasure to the song of joy which filled His universe, and received and gave back in ceaseless reciprocation the offered love of the spirits He had made. And in that thought all social life on earth should be hallowed by being made like to that of God; we should be as gods and angels one to another, interchanging ever love and service.

(2) Again, the angelic creation reveals to us the very principle of God's proper life. He would not have a life which began and ended in Himself. His life was life in others. In giving of His life He lived. That *autarkeia*, that self-sufficingness, which thinkers have bestowed on God, was not His perfect thought of being. Life did not consist of 'in Himself possessing his own desire.' His life consisted

in giving Himself away, and finding Himself in all things. And this is the deep principle of all being. That which *is*, is that which gives itself away. That which lives is that which lives in others. God would be dead were He to live for Himself alone, were He to cease to give; and we are dead when we live only to receive, when, folding the cloak of self around us, we cease to find our being in sacrifice of self.

2. Consider next the relation of the angelic life to God. It is described as a life of exalted praise. The angels are pictured as employed in ceaseless adoration. In the vision of Isaiah, in responsive song, they cry to one another, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.' In the ears of the seer of Patmos they fall before the throne and worship, saying, 'Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever.' In all Christian art they have been the embodiment of praise. In early painting, when art, being less self-conscious, was therefore more religious, the whole background of any picture which represented God or Christ in glory is formed entirely of a multitude of adoring angels. Now, in the Bible this life of praise is represented as born of a deep consciousness of the holiness of God, and the child of this consciousness is awe, intense in love and veneration. The seraphim worshipped, not because God was Almighty, but because He was holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty; and as they worshipped they covered their faces with their wings. Further, as this praise was excited by the holiness of God, so it was the mark of the personal holiness of the angels, for no living spirit can fix itself in adoration of the Holiest without becoming continually more like Him whom it contemplates and loves.

Here, then, we have a revelation of the life of heaven: holiness deepening day by day; sacred love and awe increasing as the revelation of holiness advances, and the expression of these in ceaseless worship, ceaseless praise. And the worship is not admiration of God's power, but love of God's holiness; and the praise is not singing of psalms and music of harps—these are but symbolical—it is the psalm of a life of loving service, the offering of a whole eternity of self-devoted activity to God; it is the music of a soul which, at harmony with God's life of sacrifice, is at harmony also with the inner soul of the universe.

The Eternity of Religion.

Heb. i. 8.—'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.'

Every one admits that religion has been a great power in the past; but many think it is decaying, and that it has already dwindled to be merely a subordinate factor in the world's interests and motives. We confidently assert that the reign of God is to be without end, and will be more and more recognized as the supreme and dominating human interest.

Our confidence in the eternity of religion rests, not on our knowledge of future happenings, but on our rational assurance that a certain spiritual and moral quality is the essence of the universe in which we live, of which we form an organic part, and from which our own deepest spiritual nature takes its origin. We are ready to admit many and serious difficulties and objections; but we cling to our conviction because it is the only positive and luminous working hypothesis that brings agreement into our rational life and enables us to act. The good man is not one who never has a doubt; but he is one who determines to act, in spite of all difficulties, upon the theory that righteousness ought to control; and he waits for objections to disappear of themselves while he does his duty hour by hour.

1. The Kingdom of God is everlasting because men are created by the God of eternal life for His glory, and men can rest only in Him. Priests did not invent religion; but religion created priests and churches and altars; and as religion—God's life in man—grows with the spirit of humanity, it calls for better priests, prophets, cults, creeds, churches, and it creates them.

There can never come a time, in any world, where by any possibility justice, love, faith, hope will not be the supreme good of intelligent spirits. 'Now abideth faith, hope, love.' If we are to trust reason at all, even to expose errors in religious creeds, we must assume that righteousness is at the foundation of the world-order. Any other assumption makes the pursuit of philosophy, science, action insane, bereft of moral quality.

(1) Will *athletics* take the place of religion? To the superficial observer attending a football match it might seem that religion is a matter of minor importance. No such crowds can be gathered to worship or listen to sermons. To witness the

enthusiasm, the absolute absorption in the excitement of the conflict, one might despair of religion, and, for the same reason, of art, music, and all the other highest factors of culture. But all this tumult and shouting dies. It is too furious to live. There come at last thinking, reflection, anticipation. One cannot judge of what is deepest and most enduring by some interest which flames forth like a conflagration and burns out rapidly, only to sink into grey ashes before the day is past. So far as athletic sports perfect man physically, they will remain a legitimate part of the eternal life. With growing knowledge and good sense their relative value will be established in a rational scale.

(2) Will *friendship* displace religion? It is a revelation of the Divine goodness and fellowship; never in its pure form is it a substitute for that friendship which is the archetype of all tender affections of man and wife, of parent and child, of friend with friend. When friendship roots deep in the rational universe, when it blossoms into generous deeds and sacrificial martyrdom, when it is purified from mere passion, when it insists on being deathless, selfless, then it is not to be distinguished from religion itself.

(3) Will *art* supersede religion? That cannot be; for art itself is just the most perfect method known to man of giving form and feature to Divine beauty. God is the supreme beauty, and He loves it well. When all the limbs, organs, and countenances of men are sound and perfect in action we call the being graceful. Grace in body is akin to grace in spirit. If art ever becomes deforming, immoral, debasing, it is no longer enduring; its ignoble function as 'procuress to the lords of hell' is short-lived.

(4) Will *science* and scientific interest supersede religion? There are men who are deeply absorbed, through life, in the work of investigations, libraries, laboratories. If asked whether they can get along without belief and worship, they may stop long enough to say they have not had time to think; they may even break silence with an exclamation of impatient doubt. But such enthusiasm for science is exceptional; it belongs to few men. And even with this class, to whom humanity owes so great a debt, we must not be deceived by external appearances. We must ask what beliefs are assumed without much reflection in their daily pursuits; we must ourselves judge of the significance of their deeds and the worth of their labours.

Who loves not knowledge? Who will rail
Against her beauty? Let her mix
With men and prosper; who shall fix
Her pillars? Let her work prevail.

I would the great world grew like thee,
Who grewest not alone in power
And knowledge, but by year and hour
In reverence and in charity.

2. The Kingdom of God is eternal; but are the institutions of religion abiding? Is the Church to last? That depends on whether the particular Church in question is serving the righteousness required by the ages. Any particular sect may be merged in a larger trust. Denominations have their day and cease to be; our little systems are but broken lights. We read in the *Life of Dr. Nathaniel Colver* that when the First Baptist Church at Abingdon in Massachusetts was built in 1822, it was inserted in the Deed that the building was to be a 'Calvinistic Baptist Meeting-house for ever.' That may not be. But some institution called a Church will remain so long as such agencies are needed. The poetic prophet of the new Jerusalem 'saw no temple therein'; not because religion had become extinct, but because God was all in all as the temple of that fair city.

Humanity learns to dress in furs in Greenland; wears light fabrics in India. Its garments are changed for changing seasons. Humanity builds churches and altars to meet its needs; old furniture which gets in the way is cut to new patterns or stored in museums in grateful memory of bygone services to revered ancestors. But institutions are not wholly lost, even when discarded. Each age is child of all that precedes. Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil. The sapling is merged in the tree; the rills flow into a river; the mortal will put on immortality. In evolution matter and force are transformed, never annihilated; nothing is cast aimless to the void; all experience is utilized; tears become pearls. The agonies of primitive man struggling upward reappear in Wagner's weird and awful music of the *Nibelungen Ring*.

No leaf that dawns to petal
But hints the angel plan.

In the still more familiar words of Browning:—

There shall never be one lost good! What was,
shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying
sound;

What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so
much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a
perfect round.[1]

The Eternal Son

Heb. i. 12.—'Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.'

The impressive declaration in the end of this chapter of the changelessness of God as contrasted with the mutability of things temporal is in the main a somewhat free quotation from Isaiah li. and Psalm cii., but is here applied by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews to our Lord Jesus Christ. At first sight this seems wholly unwarranted, for in both of the Old Testament sources drawn upon it is plainly God Himself who is thus alluded to and not the Christ of New Testament devotion. But the discrepancy disappears when we realize what the Christian writer had in mind when making use of these well-known ancient sayings. It is clear that by inserting them in his argument in this chapter he thought he was strengthening his appeal to his readers, and that could not have been the case unless they had shared his view that the illustration was a right and proper one.

This chapter is a piece of Christian apologetic. Its purpose is to show that Christ, the eternal Son of God, takes precedence of angels and all other created beings. He is of the Divine essence; through Him the worlds themselves were made. The scriptures of Israel testify of this, says our author, and in justification of the claim he adduces the noble apostrophe which forms our text. He would not have done this if his Hebrew readers, who were well acquainted with the scripture in question, had felt it to be inapplicable to the subject. The explanation is that both the references—the one from a great prophet and the other from a psalmist—had come to be popularly regarded as Messianic. It was generally believed that the mighty Being thus designated was the Christ, and that the cosmic powers here ascribed to Him were in keeping with His heavenly dignity. This might not have been so in earlier times; it had come to be so at the period of our Master's advent. And it is most interesting and instructive to find such a saying as this applied to Him thus early in Christian history. It demonstrates, if there were any need to do so, that from the very beginning Christ was worshipped as more than a man among men. His eternity and Divine sovereignty were both insisted upon right from the first.

1. But the point in connection with this utterance most worthy of our attention is its statement that behind all the flux and change of our earthly experience is Christ, the wisdom and the love of God made manifest. The first and last word of creation is Christ. He is supreme over all that befalls us. All else may change, but He does not change. Fleeting and ephemeral though the conditions of our mortal state undoubtedly are, He is just the same for ever, and it is He who will have the last word, as He had the first. At the heart of all mutations, all that, passing, leaves its mark upon the soul, is Christ Himself, Christ who is the one stable and reliable fact of existence, Christ who is superior to all vicissitudes, all contingencies, all privations, all revolutions of our lot, all sorrows and dreads, all death and decay. This is a beautiful thought, and as true as it is beautiful. It is the highest revelation ever given to the wistful spirit of man. It is an unspeakable comfort to those who can unquestionably accept it.

There is a story told of James the First of Scotland—not of England, a very different person—that he was accustomed to go in disguise to various parts of his kingdom to acquaint himself with the needs of his people, and to observe at first hand how his laws were being administered. That he frequently did this is historically well attested; it is something more than mere legend. He used to dress as a farmer in hodden grey, calling himself 'the good man of Ballengiech'; and in this capacity he became well known to humble friends whom he made in the course of his peregrinations far and near. There are many traditions concerning his adventures. At least one Scottish family traces the origin of its fortunes to timely service rendered to the king when he was in danger of being robbed and murdered while travelling in this unprotected state. A poor countryman who once befriended him in this way at the risk of his own life, and afterwards bound up his wounds and shared his simple meal with him, was overcome with consternation when soon afterwards he was commanded to appear at Stirling Castle, where the king kept court at mid-winter. Those were days

[1] *Abt Vogler.*

when the poor and lowly often had little to hope for from the justice of the great. To be summoned to the presence of the king was therefore a cause of terror to this his lowly subject—at any rate, it filled him with misgivings. He wondered what offence he had committed against the royal will, or of what crime he had been accused, what would happen to him, and whether he would ever see his own fireside again. One can well imagine that his thoughts would be the reverse of pleasant as he found himself conveyed by hard-featured officers from his own door to the gates of Stirling Castle. They knew nothing of the occasion; to them here was only one more malefactor to be hung or thrown fettered into the dark dungeons below the keep. Conceive then the astonishment and relief of the poor prisoner when he was ushered trembling into the presence-chamber and bidden to look up. When the familiar voice struck on his ears asking him why he refrained from looking an old friend in the face, he swiftly lifted his eyes to the throne, and, it is said, forgetting for an instant where he was, and ignoring the crowd of courtiers and all the insignia of royalty, he called out in gladness the name by which he had known the king in his own rude hut by forest and stream. All trepidation was at an end now. The man with the crown on his head was just the woodman's friend whom he had known so well in their common simplicity; and lo, here he sat, himself the source of all power and law in the kingdom of Scotland; nothing could happen save in accordance with his will.

To Christian faith our relationship to our blessed Lord is not dissimilar. It is a great mystery. Life is hard, bewildering, fluctuating, and uncertain to ordinary everyday experience. We can depend on nothing in this world; everything is more or less impermanent and frangible. We ourselves change with our surroundings; the future is hidden, the past is stained with sin. But on the throne of the universe reigns One who is of our own likeness, our kinsman, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and our times are in His hand.

2. The most glorious part of this gospel is the knowledge it brings that He who reigns in highest heaven has searched the deepest and darkest depths of our probation on earth. Incomprehensible to the understanding, but infinitely precious to the heart is this mystic truth. A saint of old is said to have been privileged at the Eucharist on one occasion to receive Christ in his arms under the form of a little child, and to kiss and embrace the tiny, sacred limbs, weeping as he did so. 'Why do you weep?' asked a celestial watcher. 'I weep for joy,' replied the saint, 'at the wonder that hands so small and weak as these should have made and governed the world of worlds.' We can enter with reverent understanding into the faith thus expressed. There is no human limitation which God does not share; there is no aspect of our burdened life which His does not compass. Omnipotence would not be omnipotence if it did not include subjection to mortal weakness, want, and pain; the glory of God would be no glory if it did not include from all eternity that which shone from the brow of our Redeemer when it was crowned with thorns upon the cross of Calvary.

The daring appeal in Francis Thompson's poem addressed to Jesus and put into the mouth of a child is not only not irreverent but a perception of something that is of the very innermost of the being of God:—

> Little Jesus, wast thou shy
> Once, and just so small as I?
> And what did it feel like to be
> Out of Heaven and just like me?
>
> Thou canst not have forgotten all
> That it feels like to be small:
> And thou know'st I cannot pray
> To thee in my father's way—
> When thou wast so little, say,
> Couldst thou talk thy Father's way?

Yes, to our faith the Jesus of history and the Christ of glory are one and the same; we cannot separate the one from the other. But when we name the name of Jesus we think of the human friend

> Whose feet have trod along our pathways rough,
> Whose lips drawn human breath.

It is the gladdest discovery that ever was made to the world that this same Jesus, who has worn our mortal flesh, been subject to our distresses, and borne our burdens with us, is also the King upon the eternal throne, the Master of our fate.

> Thou comest not, thou goest not,
> Thou wast not, wilt not be;
> Eternity is but a thought
> By which we think of thee.

3. There is one thing more which ought to be noted about this revelation of the nature of the Eternal Sonship. It is that it is fundamental to ourselves. We cannot grasp how that can be, but we are assured in the New Testament that it is so, and to realize it is only to accept the antinomy we have been considering. If the eternal Son of God did not cease to be the sovereign and soul of the universal order when He became incarnate for our salvation, is it any more inexplicable that one mode of the life of that eternal Son should be lived in us? You do not know how wonderful you are, you children of the living God. Sin may blacken the Divine image within you, but it cannot destroy it. Your earthly consciousness of being is a constant succession of changes. Days and years rush by bringing with them and carrying swiftly away the material with which we build our earthly habitations. We hardly recognize ourselves, perhaps, for the same beings that we were in childhood and youth, and our environment mostly alters in proportion. The ideas that influenced us most twenty years ago are not the ideas which possess us to-day. What we ask of life is not the same; the friendships we have formed are different. Much has come and gone, and played its part in making us what we are, which we have almost or altogether forgotten; and there are precious things of which we have been robbed by the treacheries and calamities of time which have left us poorer than we ever thought to be. It is impossible to take retrospect upon one's career without feeling the evanescence, the rapid transformation, the unstable character of even the greatest things that make up our life in the flesh. It compels one to ask the question whether man himself is anything more than a stream of sense-impressions and psychological states, whether there is any deeper and more lasting element in him than the dreams and fussy activities that make up his little day. 'He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.' 'For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.' That is true, so far as the outside of life is concerned. But there sits a silent watcher within each of us, an entity unaffected by the swift tumultuous passing of the years, yet carefully gathering up and storing within itself the tribute that they bring. It forgets nothing, loses nothing, allows nothing to escape that has ever come within its ken. And all this treasure is being accumulated for eternity; this inner self of every soul cares only for the things of time as they bear upon its return to that state in which time is not.

How great the comfort of the assurance that the spirit can never grow old because it partakes of Christ's eternal youth. Nothing which belongs to the Spirit's true life can ever perish; it is rooted in the Father's infinite love. Those whom we have known on earth pass from us, but God passes not.

They drift away—Ah, God, they drift for ever!
I watch the stream sweep onward to the sea
Like some old battered buoy upon a roaring river,
Round whom the tide-waifs hang—then drift to sea.

I watch them drift—the old familiar faces
Who fished and rode with me by stream and wold,
Till ghosts, not men, fill old beloved places,
And, ah! the land is rank with churchyard mould.

I watch them drift—the youthful aspirations:
Shores, landmarks, beacons, drift alike! . . .
Yet overhead the boundless arch of heaven
Still fades to night, still blazes into day . . .
Ah God! my God! Thou wilt not drift away.

The Angels and Man.

Heb. i. 14.—'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?'

A MERRY group sat round the smoking-room fire. There was much fun, repartee, and laughter. In the centre of it all, the gayest of the gay and pouring out reminiscences of his professional life, sat an elderly Glasgow doctor. Suddenly, as sometimes happens in such circumstances, the conversation, influenced by a chance remark, struck a graver note. And arising out of the remark—which had to do with the possibility of communication with friends in the spirit world—some one, an Edinburgh medical consultant, if my memory serves me, said, turning to the elder man, 'What do *you* think of that, doctor?' 'Well,' said the old physician, 'I won't say that I believe everything that happens to be within the boards of the Bible, but I had a good father and mother who taught me by precept and example to reverence its pages. And there is one text I do believe, and always have believed, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?"'[1]

[1] Charles Allan, *The New World*, III.

What was it that made this text so precious to the old doctor?

Well, first of all, this passage of Scripture not only implies that angels have a real existence, but it implies that they have a very intimate relation to man. The doctrine of angels is not merely a speculative doctrine. The existence of angels is not merely a matter which, if true, does not concern us. If this passage means anything, it speaks to us not merely of a heavenly heirarchy filling the courts of the eternal dwelling above, but of beings who are able to succour and to serve us in our warfare here below. And although men may sneer and scoff at such a notion, and ask where is the proof of it, we answer that the doctrine of angelical agency is as much a truth of Scripture as the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. No man has ever seen a soul, yet we do not on that account refuse to believe in the existence of souls. No man has ever seen a disembodied spirit, yet we believe that when the spirit leaves the clay it still lives and acts and thinks. No one of us has ever seen an angel, but Scripture tells us of those to whom angels have appeared, and tells us much of their mission and their agency in the world. And therefore it cannot be useless and unprofitable to dwell upon this subject. And in this hard material age, this age of iron and steam and coal and dust, this age which boasts that its philosophy is a philosophy of facts, it may be well if our thoughts are lifted for a few moments out of the hard, dusty atmosphere of our senses, if we are reminded that there are heavenly places and heavenly powers lying very near us, if we can be brought to remember that we are come 'unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.'

The text, the meaning of which is somewhat obscured in our English version, does in fact contain two statements with regard to angelic natures and their occupation. Strictly rendered, the passage stands thus: 'Are they not all worshipping spirits, liturgical spirits, sent forth to minister for the sake of those who shall be heirs of salvation?' The writer concludes in these words the first step of his argument. He is arguing in proof of the greatness of Christ as the one mediator of the New Covenant compared with all the mediators of the Old. Christ is higher far than the highest of created beings. By Him God made the worlds. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, He is the express image of His Person, He is higher than the angels, inasmuch as He has by inheritance obtained a far more excellent name than they. The name of honour which God has put upon His Son is such as has never been given to angels. To which of the angels did He ever say, 'Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee'? To which of them did He ever declare, 'I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son'? Which of them did He ever seat on His throne, saying, 'Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool'? The angels are God's ministers, but they are called upon to prostrate themselves in adoration and worship before the First-begotten of the Father: 'Let all the angels of God worship him.' They are servants, not sons. They are servants who serve in perpetual worship in His temple above; they are servants who go forth on His messages in creation; for He 'maketh his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.' They are servants who go forth carrying help and strength to the heirs of salvation; for of them is it written, 'He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.' The angels, then, are spirits who worship God and who succour man.

1. First, they are ministering, i.e. worshipping, spirits, beings engaged in the perpetual liturgy of the glorious temple above. That temple has never wanted its worshippers. The solemn anthem of praise has never been silent there. It has not been broken and marred by sin. Isaiah has given us the vision of that temple, and of its worship. 'I saw the Lord,' he says, 'sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face,' as if dreading to look upon the awful majesty of God, 'with twain he covered his feet,' as if to denote that even angelic service and angelic duty are not pure in the sight of the Eternal Holiness, 'and with twain he did fly,' as showing His readiness to fulfil the mission of God. 'And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.' Such is the worship of angels above. And yet mark how in the midst of that glory and in the midst of that worship there is the thought of earth. It is *the earth*, not the heaven, which they say is filled with

God's glory. And it is to God's prophet on the earth, filled with dismay at the vision and cast down because of his sinfulness, that the seraph comes with the live coal from off the altar, saying, 'Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.'

And like unto this is the vision of the Divine Seer of the New Testament, who was 'in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus.' He too is permitted to see the heavenly temple and the worship that is therein. And he hears 'the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' There we see the same holy worship. There we see the heavenly host ascribing praise and honour to God, and there likewise we see in the angelic company the same mysterious fellowship with man, for they ascribe praise, not to God as the Creator of the heaven and the earth, not to Christ as the Lord of angels and of saints, but to the Lamb as the victim slain, as the great sacrifice for human sin, as exalted because of His humiliation for our sakes to the throne and to the glory of God.

2. But, in the next place, as there is a worship of angels above, so there is a ministry of angels in the world.

God employs them as His agents in carrying out His purposes in the world. And what are those purposes? What has the Holy Scripture taught us concerning the office of angels?

(1) First of all, they are represented as deeply interested in the work of human salvation. The mystery of redeeming love fixes their entranced and ardent gaze. They stoop down, as it were, from the golden battlements of heaven, seeking, if it may be, to fathom that love, 'the length and breadth, the depth and height of the love that passeth knowledge.' They cannot comprehend it with all saints; for none but redeemed sinners can know that love, none but those who wear a vesture of flesh can understand what the love of God's dear Son was in putting on flesh for our sakes, and redeeming us from sin and death and hell. But still they, the pure and blessed and sinless angels, seek to know it, and thus they show their sympathy and fellowship with us in trying to understand our lot.

And again, when a sinner is converted from the error of his way, we know that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God. This is no mere imagination on our part; for the Son of God, in His most deeply affecting parables, has assured us of the fact. Yes, even in that land of eternal joy, there runs a fresh thrill of joy through the heart of the angels of God whenever a poor prodigal comes to himself; when he smites upon his breast and confesses his sin and bewails his past life, a new hallelujah from the heavenly host rings loud and jubilant through the arches of heaven. Strange it seems that *we* should take so little note of this spiritual travail, of this birth of sinners forsaking their sin and turning to God, when the angels rejoice and are glad, because one sinner has turned to his Father with the cry, 'I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' We cannot wonder that angels should have rejoiced at the Saviour's birth. We cannot wonder that one of that glorious company should have preached the first gospel to the shepherds, 'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people,' and that a multitude of the heavenly host should have hailed the message, and have caught up and prolonged the strain, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.'

We see, then, that the angels, though of spiritual and not of fleshly nature, can sympathize with our low estate, can rejoice in God's goodwill towards us. And hence, no doubt, it is that He declares that those who confess Him before men He will confess before the angels of God.

(2) And we see a further proof of their relation to us, in their attendance upon our Lord in His earthly life. They came to Him as comforters and helpers of His human nature. So we read after His first sore temptation and conflict with the Evil One in the wilderness, 'Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.' So in His last agony in Gethsemane, we read that an angel came to strengthen Him. And our Lord Himself acknowledges their power to succour, for He confesses that He might have defeated His enemies by their means. 'Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions

of angels?' It would be impossible to find a more distinct recognition than this, on the part of our Lord Himself, of the reality and the efficiency of angelic ministry. When He died, angels guarded His tomb, and were witnesses of His resurrection. Nor can we doubt that they came in shining troops to meet Him on His ascension, rejoicing in His finished redemption and victory, as some of them came to tell it to His disciples, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?' And we know that when He comes again He will come in the glory of His Father and of the holy angels, and that the trumpet of the archangel shall awake the dead.

(3) And as it was with His human life so it is with ours. If He in His purity did not disdain the ministry of angels, we certainly in our sinfulness are not above it. We cannot pretend to dispense with any aid which God in His mercy gives us. The servant is not above his lord. God's truest and greatest servants have experienced and have acknowledged this succour. Daniel did so, when he confessed that God sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths. St Peter did so, when he was delivered by an angel from prison. St Paul did so, when in his shipwreck he said that the angel of God came to assure him of his safety and the safety of all who sailed with him in the ship. St John did so, when in the isle of Patmos he received from the lips of an angel the revelation of the new Jerusalem. And when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks as he does in this text of angels as sent forth to do service for the sake of those who shall be heirs of salvation, it is plain that we are not to consider these cases as exceptional. The angelic ministry has not ceased. The angels of God, ascending and descending upon the Son of Man, are witnesses to the living intercourse between heaven and earth. Not He only, but we also as His brethren partake in that intercourse. And so this same writer tells us that heaven and earth are one; the veil is taken away. 'Ye *are come* to the heavenly Jerusalem and the myriads of angels.' We are not therefore surrounded only by our fellow-creatures. St Paul speaks of a Prince of the power of the air, and seems to intimate that evil spirits contend for the mastery over us, and on the other hand that the angels of God do battle with them on our behalf. And if our eyes could be unsealed in some hour of temptation and deadly struggle, as the eyes of the servant of Elisha were in Dothan, we might see all around us bright squadrons of 'harnessed angels,' the army of the living God. And angels may hover about the pillow of death, and carry the parting soul as they carried Lazarus into Abraham's bosom.

It is not without reason, then, that one of our great poets speaks thus of their service:—

> How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
> To come to succour us that succour want!
> How oft do they on golden pinions cleave
> The flitting skies like flying pursuivant,
> Against foul fiends to aid us militant!
> They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
> And their bright squadrons round about us plant;
> And all for love and nothing for reward.
> Oh why should heavenly God to men have such regard?[1]

3. What is the practical use of this doctrine of angels? How am I to know that they succour me? If I cannot be conscious of their aid, if I cannot be conscious of their sympathy, that aid and that sympathy will avail me little or nothing.

To this the answer is, first, Must we always see our friends in order that we may derive strength or consolation from them? No doubt it is a great thing to see face to face, and eye to eye; no doubt the warm presence of a human hand, and a responsive eye, and a sympathetic voice, kindle a glow in our hearts. No doubt, in dangers and difficulties and emergencies we find such companionship precious. But have we never leaned upon absent love? Have we never thought, in the hour of trial, in temptation, in difficulty, in sorrow, How would my friend have me act if he were here? I will nót be unworthy of him. I know his heart. I am sure he would counsel the manly, the unselfish, the generous, the noble part. I will act as if he were with me. And has not this thought really braced our nerves, and helped and strengthened us? And have we not sometimes experienced more even than this? Has not the child really felt in the hour of temptation as if a mother's voice uttered warning, or a father's eye reproved? Is there not some strange, mysterious, secret, yet real connection, half admitted to ourselves, between us and those who are absent, and who love us? Have we not felt the electric spark thrill through us with a certainty of which no philosophy could rob us? This is the first answer to the question.

[1] Spenser, *Faëry Queen*, bk. ii. canto viii.

And the next answer is, that any true belief which enlarges our conceptions of the spiritual world, which makes the unseen world nearer and more real, must be for our profit. We are so terribly immersed in the things of time and sense; we seem so unable to rise above the things which we see and touch, which we taste and smell, that the assurance of unseen helpers and friends keeping watch and ward about us, even though we do not know how they help us, is of itself a means of elevating our faith. We become more heavenly in proportion as we seem to be nearer to heaven.

> Not where the wheeling systems darken,
> And our benumbed conceiving soars!
> The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
> Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.
>
> The angels keep their ancient places;
> Turn but a stone, and start a wing,
> 'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces,
> That miss the many-splendoured thing.

Sir Ernest Shackleton during his trials in the Antarctic had a strange haunting sense 'that the party was four, not three.' As he wrote afterwards in a London newspaper: 'At times the feeling was so strong with me that I would turn, expecting to find a phantom person by my side.' On one occasion, when his small party roped together was marching through fog and darkness, 'something inexplicable' caused him to stay his feet. A moment later the moon, shining through the lifting fog, revealed 'a great gaping hole that would have swallowed a division.' 'Probably it is,' he adds, 'that ten months' comradeship with death gives one a sixth sense.' These 'stops in the mind' are well-known experiences, and it may easily be that the loss of something like a sixth sense is one of the penalties we pay for material progress, and one of the reasons why we fail to recognize what seemed to be plain enough to some of our brothers and sisters of an earlier day.

Reasons for Giving Heed.

Heb. ii. 1.—'Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed.'

By 'giving earnest heed' the writer means that we should continue and increase the earnest devotion to Christ, and to all that Christ has said and done, which marked the commencement of our Christian life. Take, for instance, the sense of danger associated with the sense of unforgiven sin. It was true then that only by Jesus Christ could we be delivered from everlasting destruction; it is just as true now. It was true then that by the life and death of the Lord Jesus our sins were atoned for; and all the wonder, and thankfulness, and joy, with which we then thought of His sacrifice, are as appropriate now as they were then. It is still true that we need the power of the Holy Ghost to sanctify our hearts. The work of Christ has not become less important to us; His love is not less amazing; the necessity of trusting in Him is not diminished. It is by permanent faith that we have permanent justification—by permanent unity with Christ that we have permanent spiritual life.

What are the motives which he suggests for giving heed?

1. This salvation has been proclaimed to us by the Lord Himself, and the *greatness of His dignity* is a motive for giving 'earnest heed' to it. In the previous chapter the writer appeals to the long series of Divine revelations which had covered many previous centuries, in order to exalt and to illustrate the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Prophets were but the servants of God, and brought to men only fragmentary intimations of His will. Angels themselves, like the wind and the lightning, are but His messengers. He has spoken to us now by One whom even the angels are commanded to worship, who is the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person; by One who created all things, and upholds them still by the word of His power; by One who, having purged our sins, is made Heir of all things, and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Yes, it is *He*—God manifest in the flesh—who speaks; who speaks to *us*, as He spake to the men that lived in Judea and Galilee eighteen hundred years ago. We still read His very words; we see Him still revealing the Father—in His gentleness to human sorrow, in His pity for human weakness, in the welcome He gives to the most wretched and profligate that repent of sin and appeal to Him for help, in the agony of Gethsemane, and the sufferings of the cross, in which Divine love plunges into the depths of human misery that sin may be atoned for and the human soul be restored to God. It is He who speaks to us; to *us* who have believed for years, as well as to those who have never believed at all; to us, after years of religious profession, as He spake

[1] Francis Thompson.

to us years ago, warning us of our danger, reproving us for our sin, and imploring, commanding us to receive forgiveness and eternal life. We, above all men—we, His servants—are bound to listen. And it is the living Christ that speaks to us.

¶ 'I cannot but feel that the religious life of Christendom has suffered grievous harm from the constant representation of the Lord Jesus by artists, poets, and preachers, in the weakness and humiliation of His death on the cross. In the Roman Church, the heart is scarcely ever permitted to escape from His dying agonies. Day after day, generation after generation, He is crucified afresh, and His shame is perpetuated. Men look upon Him in those dreadful hours when He was crowned only with thorns, when His sceptre was a reed, when an imperial robe was thrown upon Him in mockery, when He stood as a criminal before an earthly ruler, when the cruel instruments of ecclesiastical tyranny were permitted to heap upon Him insult and scorn, when the rabble of a degraded nation triumphed over His apparent discomfiture, when He was deserted by His friends, when even the Divine glory was unable to penetrate the dense clouds of suffering and disaster into which He entered for the salvation of mankind. We hear Him asking for vinegar to relieve His burning thirst; crying out, in the bitterness of His soul, because the light of God's countenance is hidden from Him. God forbid that we should ever cease to speak of having redemption in His blood. We are not ashamed of the cross; to us it is the symbol of triumph and the memorial of salvation; but it is not fitting that we should forget the glory which preceded, or the glory which was to follow. He is no longer in Gethsemane, no longer on the cross, no longer in Joseph's sepulchre. We are adoring, not a living Being, but a creation of our own fancy, when we pray to a Christ crowned with thorns. He has resumed His former glory. He reigns at the right hand of God. He wears the signs of the most awful and august authority. "How shall we escape," if, when He speaks, we refuse to listen?'[1]

2. There is another reason for 'giving earnest heed to the things we have heard'—the *greatness of the salvation* of which Christ has spoken to us, and speaks still. Every time we invoke the Divine mercy, our impressions of the wonderfulness of the redemption accomplished for us by Christ must surely be intensified and deepened. Violated vows, broken purposes, relapses into sins which we have again and again renounced, and for which we have again and again sought forgiveness, do not render our condition hopeless. They may, and they should, fill us with shame and bitter self-reproach; we may find it hard to look God in the face and tell Him of our wickedness; we may be ready to think it impossible that He should still be willing to pardon; but as soon as we appeal to His mercy, our sins, which are 'as scarlet,' become 'white as snow.'

Nor are we merely tolerated in God's presence, permitted to look upon His glory from afar, appointed to obscure duties, and called by an inferior name. The open vision of God's face, the royal priesthood, the Divine sonship, are ours still, after repeated, aggravated, and inexcusable offences. We may have resisted, grieved, quenched the Holy Ghost, but the grace which cancels our guilt grants us again 'the baptism of fire.' Yes, though after we believed we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and though through our folly and weakness we have almost banished Him from our hearts, there is still possible to us, not only ultimate escape from the perdition of ungodly men, but the recovery in this world of the image of God, perfect union with Christ, the fulness of life and power and joy.

3. Finally, if we continue to 'neglect,' there can be *no escape for us from an intolerable doom.* This is the 'great salvation'; there is no other. We have not to speculate on the future condition of those who have never heard of the Lord Jesus Christ, or to whom the gospel has been presented under such a dark disguise that it is not wonderful they refuse to give any heed to it, or whose intellectual idiosyncrasies have made it almost impossible for them to receive the theory of the Christian faith, or who, from the miserable influences under which they have lived from their childhood, have lost nearly every moral element to which the gospel appeals. Nor are we considering how those can 'escape' who, with no such reasons for unbelief as these, have uniformly and persistently rejected the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. But 'how shall *we* escape,'—we who once believed; we who were once forgiven; we who were once renewed; we who have seen the face of Christ and heard His welcome into the household of faith; we who, in addition to all the external

[1] R. W. Dale, *The Jewish Temple and the Christian Church*, 40.

proofs of the Divine Commission of the Lord, have had the consciousness of the power He exerts over the soul in awakening a new life, and in giving strength to overcome the world and to do the will of God? 'How shall *we* escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' Can we hope that God will pardon our sin? It is God's pardon to which we are becoming indifferent. Or can we hope that He will give us a better mind? He has already renewed us, but we are actually resisting His grace, and sinking into 'the second death.' 'How shall we escape?' A law transgressed still leaves an appeal to mercy; but for those who have received mercy and who now reject it, there is nothing but 'a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.'

But the whole thought of judgment has grown thin and shadowy in our day. It was not always so. 'The old Scottish peasantry,' says Dr. T. R. Glover in *The Pilgrim*, 'owed not a little of its rugged strength to its firm and clear apprehension of the reality of God's judgment. The vivid picture drawn in the Apocalypse haunted the imagination and the memory. There stood the Great White Throne, and on it sat One, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them; but man, in all his guilt and triviality, has to confront that face and look it straight between the eyes. An awful prospect it was for the best of men, but it gave intensity and depth to life. All things had to be viewed *sub specie æternitatis*—how would they look in eternity? against *that* background? before *that* throne? However they might look thus set at last, a man of sense would wish to see them so here and now. And the deeper men always tended to see them so.

'Hence came much of the Scottish character. Accustomed to look things through and through, the Scot had a way of getting to the bottom of whatever he had in mind. Even before John Knox and the Reformation, Scotland had treated Philosophy more seriously than England ever has, with an emphasis on the moral side of it, which Latin Christianity has always had from Augustine and Tertullian onward.'

'"He's a good fellow, and 'twill all be well!" says one of the pots about the potter in Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat;* and it sums up only too adequately the common theology, sheer travesty as it is of everything we find in the thought of Jesus.'

The 'good fellow' conception of God has also in practice, as it was bound to do, encouraged men and women to drop self-criticism and to improvise life as pleasantly as possible in such directions as the moment may suggest.

> Myself will to my darling be
> Both law and impulse.

To what that leads, Plato long ago showed in his appalling picture of the 'democratic man' whose soul is a democracy drunk with the strong wine of freedom, where every appetite, every passion, every notion is a citizen as well qualified as any other to take the lead. Plato may be accused of travesty, if he really meant this as a picture of the Athenian citizen of his day; but he is drawing a type which is not unfamiliar to us. The real fault which Plato finds with the man of this character is that he has thought nothing out, that he has no principles, no clear idea of right or wrong, of truth or error, that he associates no permanent value with the distinction between them.

DRIFTING.

Heb. ii. 1.—'Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them' (R.V.).

The idea of drifting runs through the Bible. It is spoken of under various names, such as 'falling away,' 'settling on the lees,' 'backsliding,' 'apostasy.' But nowhere is it more definitely expressed than here, and here only is the word itself used.

Drifting is the very sin against which the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. These Jewish Christians were in danger of drifting back to Judaism. They missed the local associations of the Synagogue worship. They felt that they were cut off from the religious inheritance which had been bequeathed by Abraham and enriched by Jacob and Moses and David. The very Scriptures which had fed their

spiritual life—the Psalms, the Wisdom literature, the Prophets—seemed to have passed out of their possession. Most distressing of all, the Law which had been given by God to Moses, and by which they had regulated their lives even in the most minute particulars, seemed no longer to have any authority. They had gained much by following Christ, and they knew it. But they began to wonder if they had not lost more. They were disappointed; they were discontented. Although they would do nothing to forfeit their hope in Christ, they wished to associate that hope with the great historic tradition into which they had been born. It was not an active deliberate surrender of Christianity that they were in danger of; it was an unconscious, and perhaps scarcely perceptible, drifting away from it.

The writer of the letter sets himself to remove the cause of their discontent. He shows them that they have lost nothing and gained everything. All that Judaism ever was to them once Christianity is to them now; all that Moses could do, Christ can do. And much more. 'Therefore,' he says—and the word carries the force of the whole epistle behind it—'therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them.'

I.

Our subject is Drifting. It is a modern subject. If those early Hebrew Christians were in danger of drifting, much more are we. It is the peculiar danger, the besetting sin, of our time. We have entered into a larger, richer, inheritance. Abraham is ours, and Moses, and David, and Christ. Centuries of Christian life and Christian victory are behind us. We have seen that which was a sign of unspeakable shame to these Hebrews turn into a symbol of unspeakable glory. And yet we are drifting away. Individually we are drifting from that first love which we learned in school or home. Socially we are drifting from that open acknowledgment of God in Christ which gives stability to a nation. To us more than to its original readers comes the solemn impressive warning of this great epistle, to give heed to the things which we have seen and heard, lest we drift away.

What then is drifting?

1. *It is aimless imperceptible movement.* It is the movement of a boat that is being carried downstream because the rowers are not exerting themselves sufficiently to head it upwards. It is the movement of a vessel that has slipped its anchorage and is tossing helplessly, at the mercy of the waves and currents of the ocean.

In that moral drift of which we are in danger there is rarely any deliberate purpose of denying God or forsaking Christ. There is simply surrender to the influences that surround us. These influences are many and sometimes almost imperceptible. The sources of a vessel's drifting out to sea may lie far away out of sight, in Arctic or in southern seas, in tidal movements, in convolutions of the coast, in irregularities of the ocean's bed, in storms that have been raging in other latitudes and longitudes. The sources of a soul's drifting may come from far away ancestors, from the old habits and fixed customs of the place one lives in, from the strong, possibly violent, personality of some near neighbour or intimate friend. That these currents are there is nobody's fault. The fault begins when they are unobserved and not guarded against; it continues when they are weakly yielded to. Before one is aware the strong current has carried the boat out to sea.

Maggie Tulliver, in *The Mill on the Floss*, had no intention of witching away the heart of Stephen Guest from her cousin. She found herself, without premeditation, in the boat with her cousin's lover. The spell of his masterful personality was over her. The river tide carried them down until they were out on the open waters, and she awoke from her love-dream to see how distant the banks were. With no deliberate purpose, with only weak acquiescence, she allowed herself to drift into a situation which she had not foreseen. The tide did the rest.

2. *Drifting is movement from higher to lower.* A river never runs upwards; it runs downwards. If we yield to the influences and impulses to which we are subject—popular opinion, ill-informed literature, mere indolence perhaps—they will carry us from the higher reaches of the spirit down to the low levels of conformity and compromise. We may have gained much. We may have won victories that were worth winning. Ideals of life may have been ours, high ideals, and no little enthusiasm and even success in realizing them. We may have come up—as Dr. Jowett would say in his eloquent manner—we may have come up the river of life, through a mass of commonplace restrictions and colourless happenings, to momentous events. It matters not what the events are, or what is the

fashion of the happenings. We have been brought into a combination of circumstances where life opened out in vaster relations, in deeper reverences, in richer moods. We could say with the psalmist, 'Thou hast brought me into a large place.' But if we do not take earnest heed the victory may end in defeat. We may lose the vision splendid, letting it die away and fade into the light of common day. By nothing worse than carelessness, nothing more culpable than the love of ease, we may drift away from all the glory and the dream.

¶ We passed many icebergs. They were drifting south. Silly things! They grew weary of that realm of white and stainless purity to which they once belonged; they broke away from their old connections and set out upon their long, long drift. They drifted on and on towards the milder south; on and on towards warmer seas; on and on towards the balmy breath and ceaseless sunshine of the tropics. And, in return, the sunshine destroyed them. Yes, the sunshine destroyed them. It is a tragedy of no small magnitude when, like an iceberg, a man is lured by sparkling summer seas to his own undoing.[1]

3. *Drifting is often simply doing nothing.* The oarsmen do not need to row down-stream; they have simply to ship their oars and the stream itself will carry them down. So says Browning, and with an emphasis like that of the writer of this epistle.

Believing, as he does, that everyone recognizes some ideal of good, and finds within himself some ethical precepts as to what he ought to do, Browning sees that he may either will to do these things, or may deliberately choose evil, or may decline to will at all. The last of these possibilities he regards as infinitely the worst. To compromise in a half-hearted way between God and Mammon is to be classed with him 'who made through cowardice the great refusal,' and for ever languishes in the outer limbo of the Inferno, 'hateful to God and to his enemies.'

> Evil or good may be better or worse
> In the human heart, but the mixture of each
> Is a marvel and a curse.

Pietro and Violante, because they did not dare to follow conscience fearlessly, but tried to blind themselves with sophistries and to mingle wrong with right, are dismissed with the Pope's stern sentence,

> Go,
> Never again elude the choice of tints,
> White shall not neutralize the black, nor good
> Compensate ill in man, absolve him so:
> Life's business being just the terrible choice.

Sincerity in striving after *something* is the first requirement of all. 'Let things be, not seem'; 'do and nowise dream';

> Truth is the strong thing; let man's life be true.

In these and other detached passages, Browning's horror of a life that is merely a process of drift is plainly expressed. It appears, however, even more clearly in such longer poems as *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* and *The Statue and the Bust.* In the former, Miranda gets no sympathy so long as he is hesitating between Clara and 'Our Lady of the Ravissante,' but when at last he does something definite, and leaps from the tower to put his faith to the test, Browning takes his side. *The Statue and the Bust* teaches the same lesson in the condemnation passed on the Duke and the lady, not for their immoral intention, but for the 'unlit lamp and the ungirt loin.' So much is it better 'to sin the whole sin' than to be only half in earnest, that Fifine's honesty in vice is counted unto her for virtue. and even Guido is excused 'somewhat, since hate was thus the truth of him.' This recognition of the superiority of making evil our good to deliberately shutting our eyes and doing nothing is in accordance with Browning's speculative belief that the evolution of love is the one thing that matters, since it is possible, in a sense, to love evil if we deliberately decide to pursue it.[1]

II.

Now, keeping in mind these three facts about drifting—first that it is usually unperceived by the person himself, however clearly others may see it; next, that it is always from a higher to a lower level of faith and life; and thirdly, that it is due for the most part to slackness, 'the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin'—let us turn to the sphere of religion and see how it is found there. For it is found in every region of life, and it is disastrous everywhere. But most disastrous is it when it occurs in the things of God. For always *corruptio optimi pessima*, the worst evil is the evil that is wrought on the best. It was because the Hebrew Christians had entered on so glorious an inheritance in Christ that the

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Faces in the Fire*, 204.

[1] A. C. Pigou, *Robert Browning*, 111.

writer of this epistle uttered so solemn a 'therefore'—'therefore ye ought to give the more earnest heed.'

Two tendencies may be mentioned. They are both peculiarly dangerous to-day, because they are so common and therefore so little thought of, and also because so much can plausibly be said in their favour. One is the tendency to drift away from definite convictions about religious things, the other is the tendency to drift away from Christ.

1. There is a strong current at the present time carrying men away from assured convictions about the things of the spirit. It is due to many causes, of which the most powerful are probably the idea that the Bible has lost its authority, and the secularizing influence of physical science.

(1) The impression is now widely prevalent that the authority of the Bible has been destroyed as a result of recent critical study. Let it be understood then, at once, that that is a mistake. Nothing whatever has been done to destroy, nothing to diminish, the authority of the Bible. The authority of the Bible may have passed from one sphere to another, from the authority of an external commandment to the authority of an inward law of life, or perhaps from a more negative 'thou shalt not hate' to a more positive law, 'thou shalt love'; but that is not a lessening, it is an increase of its authority. For it is at once a deepening of its power and an extension of its range. Not less but more movingly does the Word come home to the heart and conscience that it is not 'the law of a carnal commandment, but the power of an endless life.' And not with less but with more confidence can we carry the Bible with us wherever we go and make it the instructor of men as well as the standard of their attainment. If ever it was possible to taunt us with the worship of a God of slaughter and revenge, it is possible no longer. The God we believe in, the God we offer for all men's belief, is the God who is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. We may reject many of the particular conclusions to which scholars have come in their study of the Old Testament or the New, but we can welcome the light which that study has thrown on the progress of revelation, and the assurance it has given us that the God of the Bible is one whose essential nature is redeeming love. How foolish then is it for men to allow themselves to drift away from belief in the truths which the Bible contains, under the impression that they no longer have authority over their conduct or influence on their character.

(2) Besides the impression that the authority of the Bible has been destroyed, there is a potent cause of drift from religion in the study and popularizing of physical science. That study is likely to be hereafter associated in men's minds with our time. No former time gave so much attention to it, and no after time is likely to be so much affected by it. And it does undoubtedly tend to lessen a man's interest in religion—in the case of all but the greatest. A Thomson or a Lister may the more cry out for God the more they give themselves to the discovery of His wonderful works. But even Darwin had to confess that absorption in physical facts had the effect of destroying the faculty of realizing things that are unseen. And it is notorious that the rank and file of the workers in science in our day are little concerned about a life that is hid with Christ in God. Rarely now do they deny the existence of God. But they are often content with an undecided mind. There are certainties, they say; these belong to the physical realm; all the rest is too uncertain for either belief or disbelief. And they let themselves drift away from the faith that once was theirs, becoming content or even pleased to be known as agnostics.

There are others, however, who cannot stifle the need for God which Augustine said we were born with; and they seek to satisfy it, or smother it, in social service.

¶ I must have before me young men whose dogmatic faith, brought from a religious home, has been shattered, as St Paul's was shattered on the road to Damascus: but who are disposed, unlike St Paul, to effect no serious work of intellectual reconstruction, and to take refuge in social or practical interests from the difficulties of thought. Well, let them do so for a while. Let them leave Cambridge to go to some settlement in South London to confront our tremendous social problems. If they look below the surface they will feel, I think, more keenly amidst the masses of labouring and suffering manhood and womanhood even than in Cambridge that all social reforms will be vain that are not rooted in a religious creed, a definite faith in God and in human nature, and definite duties of Church membership. But such fleeing from speculation to action, social and philanthropic, should be

but a brief temporary expedient. The intellectual problem cannot be evaded. The intellectual reconstruction of faith must be attempted with profound sincerity and strenuous earnestness. We must trust our own minds. We must realize our own personal intellectual responsibility, using all the best lights that God has given us, not neglecting the consentient mind of Christendom. By the sense of our own moral needs, by the experience of the past, by prayer, by study of evidence, by the fundamental faith that God cannot have mocked us by implanting in our being impracticable aspirations, by fellowship with the needs of common men, we, each for himself and each for others, must labour to let our love abound unto knowledge and discrimination, till we too can test all things and approve things that are excellent: till we too can affirm, knowing what we affirm, and reject, knowing what we reject.[1]

2. The other tendency is to drift from Christ. And again there seem to be two reasons for it:—

(1) The first is the movement, which is so characteristic of our day, in favour of universal toleration. It is a movement which in many ways deserves our best encouragement. But not in every way. In the form in which we have specially to do with it now, it finds expression in the saying that one religion is as good as another, or at least that one religion is good for one nation and another for another. The saying is uttered in defiance of history and experience, but it is uttered none the less confidently on that account. Buddhism is good for Buddhists, Mohammedanism for Mohammedans, Christianity for Christians—why disturb one another's faith?

Now what history says is this. By its exclusiveness, not by its toleration, Christianity displaced the pagan religions. The early Christians declined the offer to let Jesus occupy a place in the Roman pantheon. They refused to worship Cæsar as well as Christ. And by that refusal the bloodthirsty barbarians who inhabited the island called Britain were turned into civilized citizens.

Again, what experience says is this. Wherever Christ is preached as the Saviour from sin, and the only Saviour, the result is a turning from darkness to light. The most exalted and the most debased are found to be equally ready to acknowledge its uplift. 'Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord,' is as true and as evident to-day as in the early days of the preaching of the Gospel.

Toleration is good; but the toleration of evil is not good, nor is the toleration of any lower good in the presence and possibility of a higher. 'I own in full,' says Bishop Phillips Brooks, 'the spiritual power which there is in every attempt of heathenism after God; but though there be other religions than the Christian, surely the full notion of religion is not to be gathered out of their imperfection, but out of the more perfect faith which does what they try to do, and is what they try to be. If a man asks me what a tree is, I will not send him to a stunted frost-bitten bush high up Mount Washington, but to the oak or elm which under the best conditions has opened the tree life into fullest glory. If anyone asks me what a man is, I will not show him a Kafir, or a Hottentot, but the best specimen of manhood that Europe or America can bring. So, if anybody asks me what religion is, I will not point to Mohammedanism or to Buddhism, though they surely are religions; I will go to Christianity, and in its central motive take out the real central force of all religion.'

Such a statement as that carries the greater weight when we remember that all through his life Phillips Brooks worked for true toleration.

St Paul has a special name for this manner of drifting from Christ. He calls it 'deisidaimonism.' The word occurs in his speech to the Athenians. We have difficulty in translating it. The Authorized Version offers 'too superstitious,' the Revised 'somewhat superstitious.' But they are both off the mark. Much nearer is the margin of the Revised Version, 'somewhat religious.' It is a pity we could not naturalize the Greek word, and call those who consider one religion as good as another 'deisidaimonians,' and their notion 'deisidaimonism.' Like the ancient Romans, they would simply add Jesus as one more to the multitude of gods in the world.

But on the basis of deisidaimonism, as Professor Warfield says, 'the whole missionary work of the Church is an impertinence, the whole history of the Church a gigantic error; the great commission itself a crime against humanity—launching the Christian world upon a fool's errand, every step of which has dripped with wasted blood.'

(2) Another reason for the drift from Christ in our day is the difficulty of the Christian life. Perhaps in all the history of Christianity the difficulty

[1] Bishop Charles Gore, *Orders and Unity*, 231.

of living after the mind of Christ has never been felt as it is felt now. There are reasons—the most unmistakable and most immediate being the demand for reality, in religion as in everything else, which the European War has created. The call of Christ is to a great effort, and it is a call to every one. All that is evident. But if the words of the call, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me,' have any meaning, they demand a strenuous self-surrender which the ordinary man is unfit for. Men who have faced realities in the years of the war, and the equally difficult years of the peace, will have no whittling away of the commandment. There it stands: 'This do, and thou shalt live.' And they cannot do it. So from their first enthusiasms and what seemed once a genuine desire for Christ they let themselves drift unwillingly away.

But again it is all a mistake. The difficulty is neither what it is supposed to be nor where it is supposed to be.

The difficulty of the Christian life is at the beginning. It is the entrance that is difficult. 'Agonize to enter in,' says our Lord, but He calls for no agony after we are in, and expects none. Even at the entrance the difficulty is for the righteous man who believes in his righteousness, it is not for the sinner who confesses his sin. To the repentant sinner the word is simply 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' But to the self-righteous it is 'turn'; it is 'become as a little child'; and there is no greater conceivable difficulty than that. For it is to uproot the habits of a lifetime, it is to undergo a radical change in one's mental and moral outlook. The prodigal son had no difficulty in entering. He repented and was forgiven. The elder brother had great difficulty. Did he ever enter in? The 'woman that was a sinner' had no difficulty. She kissed His feet, and He said, 'Go in peace.' Simon the Pharisee had great difficulty. Did he ever enter in?

But when the entrance is made the difficulty in its agony is over. For to love, as to God, all things are possible, and the life is now a life of love. It is true that both St Paul and the writer of this epistle speak of the Christian life as a race. But their figure means no more than we mean when we say that the boat must be headed up the stream. They warn their readers against slackness, against indefiniteness and indecision, because these may be the causes of that drifting from Christ which is so easy and may be so fatal. But they speak of the life itself as a joy, not an agony; and our Lord draws the picture of its true nature in the familiar words, 'my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Certainly Christ calls upon us to love our enemies, and no explanation will explain away the directness or the completeness of the demand. The true follower simply finds that he can do it. St Paul recognized it in all its force and comprehensiveness; his answer was, 'I can do all things in Christ who strengtheneth me.'

As you cross a Highland moor you may come upon a curious bright streak of green, winding in and out among the heather, its pure and shining verdure clearly marked against the dull brown of its immediate surroundings. What is it, and how came it there? Whence rises the sap to feed this soft elastic ribband of turf? There is a tiny stream below, a runnel of sweet water flowing down there out of sight, only hinting its presence by the green beauty above.

The life of the follower of Christ is nourished and refreshed by the spring of living water which the unseen presence of his Lord supplies. He has in him 'a well of water springing up unto eternal life.'

III.

The Christian life is easy as all life is when it has room to live. There is nothing that more impresses us with ease than the life of the tree out in the open field, nourished with the soil, freshened with the rain, swayed and strengthened by the breeze. That is the life of the believer in Christ. If it is not always found so, it is the fault of the believer. The psalmists were sometimes perplexed, sometimes distressed, sometimes in despair. But they knew that the fault was theirs. It was due to feebleness of faith. When they believed, they got liberty—liberty to grow easily. 'Thou hast brought me forth also into a large place.'

For the life of the believer in Christ is unlike the life of a tree. The believer has a will and he has to use it. In order that his life may be easy he must *keep himself* in the love of God. There are certain ways of doing that, and he has to attend to them.

1. There is the way of Rest. That is first, and always first. It corresponds to sleep in the material life. Now we sleep not after the day's toil but before it. We sleep to fit us for the toil of to-morrow.

After sleep we come into the world. And the freshness with which we come, the abounding irrepressible vitality of the child is our continual astonishment. We begin our Christian life by rest. We put ourselves by faith into the Redeemer's hands; we 'rest upon him alone for salvation.' And then before every new morning's service we repeat the act of trust.

2. There is also the way of Service. In the material life we need to exercise the body and the mind. In the immaterial life we need to keep the spirit fit by daily doing the will of God. We take up our cross every day and follow the Lord. It is not necessarily a heavy cross. Necessarily?—it has no business to be. The Saviour's cross was heavy; but just to make ours light. For us now, 'my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

The service is manifold—some form that is most fitting for me always there. It obliterates distinctions. No sacred and secular. All is for Him. What *am* I fitted for? Let me not forget that every faculty I have is from Him and is to be employed in His service. And every faculty, as it is employed, is being trained for higher employment, for more pure and lasting service.

3. Then there is the way of Sustenance. In the material bodily life I need food. I cannot live long without it. In the spiritual life the spirit has also and as imperatively to be fed. What is the food of the spirit?

It is the Word of God. Take that comprehensively. It is found most accessibly, and we still think most nourishingly, in the book we call the Bible. Not equally in every book of the Bible? Perhaps not; but different appetites enjoy different sauces. In any case, first and chiefly in the Bible.

That is worth thinking about in these days. Many are feeble among us, and many sleep. They do not feed their spirits. They do not read the Bible. You remember the Report of the Royal Commission—was it not a Royal Commission?—on the teaching of English? The commissioners said that the best teacher of English is the Bible. Ah, but it is the best teacher of God.

But how much Bible? Not much. Not much at a time. Take it in diets, as you take your bodily nourishment. How many diets in a day? Five, four, three, two? Surely two at least. What body will be sustained on less than two? Or what spirit? But the diet need not be a big one. Much better not. A full meal is undesirable. Let it be just as much as one can comfortably digest. And so rich are some of the meals which the Bible offers, that a very small portion will make a good diet.

Variety is commended in food. Do not adhere too closely or too constantly to one book. The Psalms are not as the Epistles. And the Epistles are not as the Gospels. Even the curried meat of Ecclesiastes has its use; even the sweets of the Song of Songs may be enjoyed by unjaded appetites. And if the Bible alone is to you as vegetarianism is to a meat-eater, then on an occasion, even for direct sustenance, go to John Bunyan, Thomas à Kempis, Alexander Whyte. And yet further?

Yes, further—if you know where you are and what you are there for.

4. But the great maintainer of the spiritual life is Prayer. It is the breathing of the bodily life. And breathing is the first sign of life. Is the child still-born? Not even the doctor can tell otherwise than by the breathing. "Behold he prayeth!"—it was the proof of Saul's spiritual life; what more could Ananias desire? And when the end comes, it is still the only evidence.

> We watched her breathing through the night,
> Her breathing soft and low;
> As in her breast the wave of life
> Kept heaving to and fro.

The breathing ceases and the life is ended. But 'he that believeth in Me shall never die.' For he will never cease to pray.

He will never cease to pray. Did St Paul forget that? 'Now abideth faith, hope, love—these three.' Did he forget prayer? He did not need to remember it. The anxious mother says, 'Now don't forget to take your meals regularly.' She does not say, 'Don't forget to breathe.' We do not need to be reminded to breathe. We breathe unconsciously. And this is prayer. It is unconscious. It is always. We pray without ceasing. There come occasions when breathing is conscious enough and even painful. It is then a wrestling with disease. And there come seasons when prayer is a terrible wrestling with doubt. But the normal prayer, the true prayer, is steady, unconscious, highly healthful communion with the Father.

Add to your faith prayer and reading and service and rest, and if these things be in you and abound your spiritual life will be as a tree planted by the

streams of water. And you will not drift away from the things of Christ.

Crowned in Christ.

Heb. ii. 8, 9.—'But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour.'

This passage contains a reference to Psalm viii.: 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.' It is evident that the Old Testament poet who wrote the eighth Psalm was thinking of man's superiority to the rest of creation when he penned these words, but the New Testament writer who thus makes use of them is thinking of something deeper and more spiritual. What he has in mind is the triumph of humanity in Christ over all the things which now have power to vex, harass, and limit us. It is not only the lower creation and not only the visible world to which the promise applies; we are here told that it is our destiny in union with Christ to attain to sovereignty over everything, material or otherwise, which for the time being is able to hold our spirits in thrall, or to keep us out of our full heritage of liberty, life, and joy. Strictly speaking, it is Christ of whom the promise is thus specially construed, though the Psalmist did not mean it that way. The New Testament author gives the saying a far wider, deeper range. He insists that it is Christ's sacred humanity, His divinely human nature which is to secure the fulfilment of this prophecy, by winning and establishing complete dominion over all but God the Father Himself. Nevertheless, His victory is ours too; it can be consummated only in and through us; and whatever gains are to accrue from it will belong to us in virtue of our fellowship with Him.

1. The first thought, then, suggested in this connection is that of the imperfect character of the liberty and power we at present possess. 'We see not yet all things put under him.' In fact, we see almost the contrary. Man is conventionally referred to as the lord of creation, but his lordship is very sharply conditioned. The first chapter of Genesis tells us that God's commission to the creature He had fashioned in His own image was: 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.' From that day to this—if we may take the utterance literally—human progress has consisted for the most part in the gradual subjugation of the forces of Nature to man's will; little by little he has been making himself master of her secrets and turning them to his own advantage. Perhaps in no age of the world has this process been so conspicuous as to-day. To-day it might truly be said of the achievements of man, as the Second Isaiah says of the Deity, that He 'hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance.' Stupendous, indeed, has been the advance in recent years in the assertion of man's dominion over Nature; and as to the living creatures who formerly contested with him the possession of the earth, they no longer count; either they have to obey him, to yield him gratuitous service, or to fly from before his face.

So far, then, the reverent and grateful boast of the Psalmist is in a fair way to being justified. But the other side of the matter is that we ourselves are as much in subjection as the beasts that perish to certain natural laws which refuse to be violated. No law of Nature is ever broken, though we sometimes talk as if it could be. We do not break Nature's laws; we cannot do so; they break us if we try. The only way in which, after all, we have ever managed to subdue Nature to our purposes is by working with Nature, not against her; we are masters only in the measure that we have learned to understand and obey. The lordship is real as far as it goes; it has increased our range of activity, given us a wider and richer life, and doubtless will continue so to do as years go on. But there is a very definite limit to what is possible in this respect; we are still kept under by the conditions of our earthly lot and not allowed to feel that we are able to do as we like.

Take our circumstances. You cannot do what you want to do except in a comparatively small degree. You are being acted upon all the time in one way or another, subjected to pressure, forced this way and that. Really, when one comes to analyse it, there is very little free choice left to anybody in this world. The most successful man

who has ever lived, and the strongest, too, if one could settle who that is, has been far more the creature than the creator of his own environment, of the totality of the forces which have made him what he is. Free? Autonomous? A king within your own soul? You have never been any of these for as much as five minutes. At the best you have but learned how to submit to the inevitable in such a way as to enhance your grasp upon life, your consciousness of well-being.

One thing more. You are not morally the man you would like to be. It is not only the world outside you that causes you trouble and makes you feel your weakness, but the world inside too. At this moment you may be suffering tortures of humiliation and self-reproach at the recollection of something you have done—some exhibition of evil temper, perhaps, or some vile action performed in an even darker mood. Perhaps no one but yourself knows or dreams how you suffer on account of it. Those you have injured blame you without mercy, perhaps despise you, and think you heartless or indifferent about it. They little imagine what you are passing through. Their attitude to the matter shuts you up within yourself; you cannot speak, would not be believed if you could; no one understands how you hate and loathe that devil that lurks within your soul, but he won't go simply because you tell him to. You are held in unwilling subjection to things within your own nature which you cannot but acknowledge to be inimical to your highest good.

2. But now, let us look a little deeper into things, let us do men justice. Has man ever acquiesced in his sinful, sorrowful slavery? Never. It is always under protest that he regards it. It is always with a sense of fallen greatness. It is always with discontent. It is always with an unconquerable conviction that man was made for something better. Why is it, when we read a story of heroic generosity, that we feel life to be worth living? What is the meaning of that sense of grandeur, of greatness, of triumph, that comes over us? How is it? What is it? When we see a brave deed of self-denial; at another time, when we hear of a cruel, mean deed done—how do we feel towards each? Are we all bad? If that were our natural lot we should acquiesce in the evil deed, we should have no shock, no surprise; instead of that there is a sense of surprise and revolt. There is an error somewhere—a disaster, a calamity. It is a sin—sin—a thing that robs us of our heavenly nature. Do we recognize it as a part of human nature? No. Sin is unnatural, sin is horrible. That is the meaning of the death scene in *Macbeth*. A knock at the door reveals to the murderer the distance his crime has set between him and the simple ordinary life of man. Sin is something unnatural, it is a calamity, an intrusion, it ought not to be there. Fellowship with God! Impossible to us! Why? Because we were never meant to have it? No. If there be a God at all, if He made this world, if He made men to think and feel and understand, then God meant the world to be like a written book that should speak of Him. Why does not all Nature so speak to man? Because we have sinned, because we have lost the lineage, because we are not like Christ, the sinless Son: to Him the lilies had the touch of God on them, the birds in every song proclaimed His praise.

So, then, while we see that all things are not put under man, we see plainly that God meant it otherwise, and that God made man to be lord of creation. What God does not wish is hardly likely to stand. If man has missed being what he was meant for, there is good possibility that he may regain it. If God be love, there is certainty. I enter a master-painter's studio, and I see upon his easel a spoiled picture. I can see the majesty of the design, the beauty of the ideal, but from some defect in the pigment or flaw in the canvas it has gone wrong; it is blurred and dim and spoiled. It seems to be ruined for ever. But not so to him; that man will not allow the disaster to prevent him from creating in visible form the vision of beauty that once charmed his heart. The man would not be a man of will and determination if he allowed the disaster to hinder him in his purpose. God is unchangeable. God is God.

Man is not what God made him for; man is not what God made him to be; and God is God. His purpose may lapse for a little, His designs may be delayed on the way, but if the beginning points to the grand end, that end will be reached. God meant it. God means it. God will do it.

3. Now what is the light that this chapter throws upon the question? What is the light that this text throws upon the question? 'We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, . . . crowned.' The emphatic word is that He was

made a little lower than the angels. 'We see Jesus . . . crowned.' We see Jesus in complete authority over the world, and in Jesus we see humanity crowned; and the only place in which humanity can be found in true dominion over the world is in Jesus Christ. If we look at humanity, this writer tells us, outside Jesus, it is simply not true to say that it is crowned. He says emphatically: We see not yet all things put under the feet of humanity. When we look at Jesus we see humanity dominant, ruling the world, at the very head of all things. In Jesus we see not only His crown, but humanity's crown; and the crown which He wears is a crown of thorns. It is not intellectual distinction and power which crowns Jesus, but suffering and death; and His coronation is our coronation, and we can only find our great place in the universe, with everything under our feet, in Jesus whom we see crowned.

The day will come when no man will have to struggle to do right or fear to do wrong, when there will be no question of such a thing, but we shall simply live as the flowers bloom and shed their fragrance in the summer air; and by so living, spontaneously, gladly, inevitably, fill our appointed place in God's universal plan and contribute our full share to the blessedness of His whole creation.

Well, that is what is promised here. How will it come about? It can come about, not by the destruction of anything in ourselves or in the world without, but only by the assimilation of every part and faculty thereof to the love of Christ. When that is once master of all conscious beings, and perfectly expressed in a glorified humanity, then death and hell shall be no more. The guarantee of it is that God our Father has never been subjected as we are to material limitations of any sort or kind. 'But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.'

¶ In the great Palace of the Popes at Avignon, itself a reminder of one grievous ecclesiastical catastrophe, there is a long and lofty Hall of Audience. No doubt it was in this audience-chamber that Simon Langham (afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury) waited till he could procure at great price the Papal confirmation of his election as Abbot of Westminster. The walls were once covered with frescoes, the work, it is believed, of Simone di Memmo, the Sienese. But the hall became part of a vast whitewashed barracks, and the frescoes have mostly perished or been mutilated beyond recognition. But one there was of St. Christopher crossing the stream with his light but holy Burden. The ceiling of a canteen cut off the burly saint, and to-day only a rough red head suggests what St. Christopher was as the artist left him. But the little Christ remains, with the nimbus of glory round His curly head and His arms stretching eagerly right out of the picture. He rides, as it were, on nothing, but He still rides on. After all the schisms in the Christian body between Pope and anti-Pope, after all the struggles in the life of states, when sacred shrines are turned into shambles by the men of blood and iron, the Christ survives in perfection, radiant and serene; and we can still 'behold him . . . even Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour.'[1]

The Taste of Death.

Heb. ii. 9.—'That by the grace of God he should taste death for every man.'

THE idea intended to be conveyed by the phrase 'tasting death' is a strong one. Many, no doubt, when they read of our Lord's 'tasting death,' take it as implying that He merely 'had a taste of death,' as we say—passed through it with the minimum of conscious experience of its terror. Precisely the contrary is what is really meant. What the phrase signifies is that He was not a passive subject of death, of whom it is merely to be said that He died, and that is all, but that He drained this bitter cup to its dregs. It is the horror and the pains of death that are thrown up boldly for our contemplation by this phrase; and therefore it is used to take up again the preceding phrase—'the suffering of death'—a phrase which by an unexpected turn of expression itself emphasizes the sufferings of death. Jesus became a man not merely that He might suffer death, but that He might endure the sufferings of death.

Now in Scripture death is spoken of in three ways. There is (1) the death of the body, or physical death; (2) the death of the soul, or social death; and (3) the death of the spirit, or spiritual death. The bitterness of the taste of death to

[1] E. N. Pearce, in *The Record*, Feb. 6, 1914, 139.

Jesus lay in this, that at one and the same time He suffered physical, social, and spiritual death.

(1) *Physical Death.*—Jesus suffered the death of the body.

He suffered pain of body in life and in death. This could not but be, if He was a real man. As incarnate He entered into mortal man's common heritage of pain and death, and suffered according to the common laws of nature. He may have suffered through His life less pain of body than falls to many. At any rate no excesses will have injured His health. We read of weariness and hunger, but not of accident or disease. Presumably in life pain will have performed the same functions for Him as for other men.

He took it, we may imagine, as it came, not insensibly. Except as in the way of nature—when, for instance, pains of hunger and weariness, experienced or anticipated, warn a man to eat and rest—there is no reason to suppose that He especially either sought pain or avoided it. He was master of His body. Its pleasure and pain alike had with Him their due weight, their function in the natural order; but as compared with the call of duty and of love they had no weight at all. They had their place and were kept there. No bodily pain or pleasure, much or little, could turn Him from His path of duty or purpose of love.

Death, apparently, He did not court. He seems to have kept deliberately out of the way of it till He was conscious His hour was come, and then He met it without haste but without hesitation. He went to His death in normal vigour of body, so far as we know. Of the actual bodily pain of crucifixion and death the two malefactors crucified with Him may have suffered more, or they may have suffered less. We cannot tell.

But we may think upon what Newman says: 'Do you recollect their offering Him wine mingled with myrrh, when He was on the point of being crucified? He would not drink of it; why? because such a potion would have stupefied His mind, and He was bent on bearing the pain in all its bitterness. You see from this the character of His sufferings; He would have fain escaped them, had that been His Father's will; "If it be possible," He said, "let this chalice pass from me"; but since it was not possible, He says calmly and decidedly to the Apostle, who would have rescued Him from suffering, "The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" If He was to suffer, He gave Himself to suffering; He did not come to suffer as little as He could; He did not turn away His face from the suffering; He confronted it, or, as I may say, He breasted it, that every particular portion of it might make its due impression on Him. And as men are superior to brute animals, and are affected by pain more than they, by reason of the mind within them which gives a substance to pain such as it cannot have in the instance of brutes; so in like manner our Lord felt pain of the body with an advertence and a consciousness, and therefore with a keenness and intensity, and with a unity of perception, which none of us can possibly fathom or compass, because His soul was so absolutely in His own power, so simply free from the influence of distractions, so fully directed *upon* the pain, so utterly surrendered, so simply subjected to the suffering. And thus He may truly be said to have suffered the whole of His passion in every moment of it.'[1]

(2) *Social Death.*—Besides the death of the body Jesus endured the death of the soul, by which we mean the loss of human fellowship. Social life is life in touch with humanity; the more its human interests are, the more is it life. Many a man who is enjoying vigorous physical life is dead if he is self-centred. His soul is dead, all the impulses of soul that ought to go out to his fellows in sympathy and help being dead within him. But a man may be dead socially through the force of circumstances. Alexander Selkirk, cast on an uninhabited island, was socially dead. He had no one there to care for him, no one for whom he could care.

Jesus died socially. 'They all forsook him, and fled.' How keenly He felt it. He spoke of it to them beforehand. 'Ye shall leave me alone,' He said. He spoke of it particularly and pleadingly to Peter. 'I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.' For Jesus was intensely social. From the very beginning we see Him calling men to be with Him. We see Him enjoying their companionship and laying bare to them the great secrets of His life and death. They were with Him, as He once said, throughout all His trials. And, however slow they were to understand, His patience with them was never spent, His love for them was never exhausted.

Listen to Mr. Herbert Stead: 'He loved His

[1] J. H. Newman, *Discourses addressed to Mixed Congregations*, 328.

fellow-men and women. He longed to be with them. He was utterly unlike the religious solitary, the hermit, or the recluse. He sought solitude, it is true, but only that He might enjoy the Unseen Fellowship, and might return again to human intercourse with quickened outflow of sympathy. The people He chose to have about Him were no men of genius or distinction. They were commonplace members of the common people. Yet how amazingly fond of them He was! "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Indoors or out of doors, in deep joy or in the very tragedy of grief, He craved for their company. His greatest followers have found Him to be the very soul of social cohesion.'[1]

It was a bitter ingredient in the cup which His Father had given Him to drink that even of the Twelve one betrayed Him and the rest forsook Him.

(3) *Spiritual Death.*—And Jesus died spiritually. He lost the sense of the Father's presence. 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

Spiritual death is often spoken of in the Bible. One writer says, 'She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.' She may be very much alive physically; she is evidently very much alive socially; and yet she is dead, for she is out of touch with God. To Jesus this was death, the only death worth calling death. 'Give place,' He said; 'the maid is not dead, but sleepeth.' And they laughed Him to scorn, for of course she was dead physically. To Him physical death was sleep. 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.'

Now this was the death that made the taste of death so bitter. On any lower conception of the death which Jesus was ever anticipating, it seems impossible to explain that extraordinary shrinking from the crisis impending which characterized our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane. We are distinctly told that in that dread experience His mental anguish was such that He prayed repeatedly that if it were possible 'the cup might pass' from Him. The intensity of His prayer and the stress of the conflict within, was such that it is said, 'and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.'

That Christ experienced a spiritual anguish altogether unparalleled is found in the language of His cry on the cross: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' This was the high-water mark of His sorrow. True, many efforts have been made to explain away the evident force of this cry, saying it is an exaggeration due to His peculiar depression, etc.; but such a view can be had only at the expense of the reliability of the self-consciousness of Jesus in His supreme redeeming hour. How this spotless Son of Man could enter into this experience as a reality may be beyond our psychological analysis, but it is not beyond our faith. That the Holy One by the depth of His sympathy, the infinity of His knowledge and His measureless sensitiveness, should be able to experience the atmosphere, at least, of spiritual death presents no more difficulties than does the possibility of the Incarnation itself. To take the language as it stands involves the fewer difficulties. That Christ was for the time, sympathetically at least, in the place of an outcast world, and partook of the sense of the abandoned before a judicial tribunal, when He could say only 'My God, my God'—not 'my Father, my Father'—is most evident. In what contrast to this consciousness was Christ's cry when He emerged from the cloud, and said, '*Father*, into thy hands I commend my spirit'; and that other utterance to Mary on the morning after His resurrection, when He spoke of His ascension 'unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.' The sense of Fatherhood which had been obscured was found again, and with it life and salvation for His own for evermore.

¶ In harmony with this is Mrs. Browning, correcting Cowper's morbid mood as thinking himself deserted by God, when she wrote:—

Deserted! God could separate from His own essence rather
And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous Son and Father;
Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry His universe hath shaken—
It went up single, echoless, 'My God, I am forsaken!'

It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use those words of desolation;
That earth's worst frenzies, marring hope, should mar not hope's fruition,
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture in a vision!

[1] *The Proletarian Gospel of Galilee.*

The Captain.

Heb. ii. 10.—'The captain of their salvation.'

TWICE does the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews use a title for Christ which our translators have found it difficult to render into English. The Authorized Version translates it once as 'captain' and once as 'author'; the Revised Version both times as 'author,' with 'captain' in the margin. The word is picturesque, and has a romantic and military flavour. It describes one who makes a way, and makes it first: the leader of a file; if you will, the captain of a company of soldiers; so long as you understand by that one who commands his company from the front and not from the rear.

In describing the great cavalry charge of the dragoons at Balaclava, the historian writes: 'The custom of the service requires that an officer who has the immediate command of a body of cavalry engaged in the duty of charging shall be the actual leader of the onslaught in the strictest sense, riding forward at a distance of at least some few yards in advance of his squadrons.' And then he centres our gaze upon that single and heroic figure riding alone into the jaws of death.

The only word that has quite the feeling of the original is our word 'hero.'

1. Jesus, simply as a man, is worthy of a man's admiration, worthy to be taken as a man's hero. Not only do we get such stories as that of His behaviour to the crowd at Nazareth when He 'passing through the midst of them went his way'—which is less likely to be miraculous than to be simply an example of the well-proved fact that a man who shows no fear of a mob is usually safe from it; but this courage comes out especially, as might be expected, in the later events of His life. He certainly foresaw—not necessarily by any supernormal prevision—that if He went to Jerusalem He would be put to death. Yet He 'steadfastly set his face' to go there. And then came His arrest. He knew what would happen, that if He once fell into the hands of His enemies, they would, by fair means or by foul, get Him condemned to death. Yet through the whole scene He was absolutely calm. 'Friend,' He said to Judas, 'wherefore art thou come?' He forbade His followers to use violence; 'the Scriptures must be fulfilled.' And so He gave Himself up and His disciples fled. And then came the trial. 'Here stand I,' cried Luther to his judges, 'God help me; I can do no other.' But Jesus was even braver, for He was calmer, absolutely confident of Himself, not denying His claims, though the confession of them was the culminating evidence against Him. To all the witnesses He was silent, knowing that the evidence was false, and procured against Him by His judges. The sham trial could have but one issue, and, with the most agonizing of deaths in front of Him, He quietly awaited it. Even when He was actually on His way to Calvary, and so over-wrought by His sufferings and His weariness that Simon had to be called in to carry His Cross for Him, He turned to the women who followed Him lamenting, to bid them not weep for Him but for themselves and for their children. On the Cross His first thought was for His persecutors, and His second for His fellow-sufferers.

His moral courage was no less remarkable. No man ever had the courage of His convictions more fully than Jesus. He found that His teaching was putting Him in opposition to the established religious authorities, yet He never wavered. If it is too much to say that He deliberately sought conflict with them, He at least never shrank from it. He did what He thought right, and taught as He believed, and if the Pharisees did not like it—well, so much the worse for the Pharisees. Whether it was a question of keeping the Sabbath, of ceremonial washings, of divorce, or of anything else, if His idea of God opposed that of others, He met them face to face, however powerful they were. He was not afraid of Herod's threats; which indeed He treated with contempt. His call was a call to manhood; 'Deny thyself,' He said, 'take up thy cross; put thy hand to the plough, and never look back; do not be ashamed of me, and so shalt thou be my disciple.' No man can follow without courage this pattern of all courage.

2. There is that in the heroism of Jesus which outstrips the human. Human nature has a tremendous capacity for heroism, but it often gets its inspiration and support from that which somewhat detracts from the purest courage. The deeds

which are still singled out by humanity as worthy of decoration are those of the battlefield, where the soldier would be the first to confess that excitement and bloodlust make one for the time mad and blind. Even where there is the exercise of cool choice, the determination to play the hero is often upheld by the desire to win glory for the regiment or the school, to gain the praise of one's people or country. With Jesus all this was absent; for no one regarded the course He was pursuing as anything but a tragic mistake. It looked like abandoning the cause of humanity over some scruple about using force, of refusing the leadership which alone would have shown whether He was capable of putting this world right. His family, the common people, His disciples, all for whose opinion He cared, were disappointed in Him. They would have fought for Him to the death; but they could do nothing for this man who refused to fight at all.

Some people's fearlessness is obviously due to the fact that they have no imagination; they cannot envisage a situation beforehand, and therefore they do not fear. The fearlessness of others is because they do not feel. Some have died cheerfully at the hands of the populace because they despised and loathed them. Jesus was not of this class. He could always see the cross; it was getting clearer to Him with every step He took. We are compelled to recognize that He was ultra-sensitive, not with the disorganization of ill-health, but with the trembling responsiveness of a highly-strung nature; He was dead long before those who were crucified at His side. It must be a terrible thing to die at the hand of those you hate, fighting to the last and only gradually overborne; but to die unresisting at the hand of those whom you love—that passes knowledge.

This willingness to die alone, uncheered, unresisting, for what seemed a mistaken and impossible ideal, is heroism that we can hardly expect man to rise to. We feel, with the centurion who watched Him die, that there is something God-like here. It is the sort of heroism that silences applause and awakes our worship. We know that we must be in the presence of valuations we cannot see, of a person who has other standards and counts this life small. Hero-God was one of the names Isaiah bestowed upon the Messiah. Jesus has rightly earned it.

Have we not found it so? Some one has related that a Japanese General was given the Gospels to read for the first time, and after he had perused them, he was asked what was the quality in Jesus Christ that struck him most. 'His bravery,' was the reply.

Perfection Through Suffering.

Heb. ii. 10.—'For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.'

THE perfection through suffering which is here declared to take effect upon our Lord does not mean the addition of anything to, or the purging away of anything from, His moral nature. We are refined by suffering, which purges out the dross if we take it rightly. We are ennobled by suffering, which adds to us, if we submissively accept it, that which without it we could never possess. But Christ's perfecting is not the perfecting of His moral character, but the completion of His equipment for His work as the Captain of our salvation. That is to say, He Himself, though He learned obedience by the things that He suffered, was morally perfect ere yet one shadow of pain or conflict had passed across the calm depths of His pure spirit; but He was not ready for His function of Leader and Originator of our salvation until He had passed through the sufferings of life and the agonies of death.

1. This doctrine lies at the very heart of Christianity, and it is peculiar to Christianity. It is the doctrine of the Cross, which in all times and places is, as St. Paul says, to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness. It is what the same Apostle elsewhere calls the offence of the Cross, and an offence it must always be to the majority. For what does it mean? Not only that, as Plato had already discovered, 'we cannot get rid of sin without pain'; not only that, as the proverb of a modern nation has it, 'Without sorrows no man is ennobled'; but that to suffer for others is a Divine thing; that it is not only an essential part of the discipline of life for the erring and weak, but even more, part of the royal prerogative of life for those whom God calls to follow most closely in His own footsteps. He who was called pre-eminently the Man of Sorrows was the only-begotten Son of God.

2. If we give this doctrine its full and due weight it must alter completely our attitude towards the sorrow and pain of the world. It may not solve what is called the problem of evil. But it goes a good way towards solving it. There are some evils which are not caused by anyone's sin. Such are bereavements, accidents, sicknesses, extreme poverty. These are bearable for those who believe in human immortality. They are constantly borne with a patience and resignation which we recognise as morally beautiful. Some of them are being diminished year by year as scientific knowledge grows, and it is God's will that they should be still further diminished. Now, it is perhaps difficult to believe that evils of this kind have any redemptive value. We revolt against them because they seem to be useless. They look like random blows of a blind fate, and this is why they are such a trial to our faith. But Christianity teaches plainly that every temporal evil may be transmuted into an instrument of spiritual good. Many of us have learned this by experience. Many of us, to quote a modern poet,

> Have seen in mould the rose unfold,
> The soul in blood and tears.

Yes, even the fierceness of man may be turned to God's praise; all things may work together for good to those who love God.

3. The evils which are caused by sin are, no doubt, a hard problem. But ought we not to believe that what in God's sight is most terrible is not the suffering caused by sin, but the sin itself; and that He allows sin to show its malignant nature by causing all this suffering and misery, just that we may recognize it as a hateful thing, and strive to root it out? It is in this field that the redemptive value of suffering is most manifest. Both the innocent victim of others' sin, and the reformer who stands up manfully against the united forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil, have to suffer grievously and unjustly; but their sufferings, even in this world, are not thrown away. They touch the human conscience; they force men to recognize the ugliness and cruelty of unrighteousness, and the beauty of self-sacrificing love. That love and goodness should suffer is the offence of the Cross. It is the hard-seeming law under which we live here. There is a better world where those who have been faithful unto death receive a crown of life; but we are not there yet.

Can we wonder that suffering humanity has found in the Cross of Christ an emblem of unspeakable comfort? Man is born to sorrow, as the sparks fly upward. We cannot escape it. But Christianity tells us that we ought not to wish to escape it, since by it we may 'fill up on our part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in our flesh for his body's sake.' Our pain, how we know not, is, or may be, a part in the redemptive work of Christ. It may be that we are called upon to advance the Kingdom of God more by what we bear than by what we do. To carry our cross after our Master, to follow Him, at however great a distance, knowing that He is waiting for us at the end of the journey, with that blessed welcome, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord'—is not this enough to sweeten the bitterest cup? Is it not enough to make even a coward brave, and to give patience even to the petulant?

There is a fine illustration in one of Mr. Mabie's *Parables of Life*:—

'It was a radiant world on which the boy opened his eyes; a world so beautiful that it was impossible to look at it without seeming to see through it a richer and more wonderful loveliness about to rise out of its depths. It was a beauty which made the spirit faint with expectation and the heart ache with a sense of coming joy. In such a world all things were within reach of the eager soul, blithe with the bliss of the morning and eager to share the impulse of life which, like a fathomless tide, crept to the summits of the hills and left verdure and fragrance sweeping on behind it. The boy's eye was clear and keen; he saw at a glance the wonder of things in endless variety and exquisite adaptation. The boy's thought was orderly, coherent, vital; he discerned the marvellous relation of parts to the whole and the glorious unity in which all things were held and harmonized. The boy's imagination kindled and glowed; the vision of an invisible loveliness, a higher and diviner beauty, rose before him as sight and thought brought the visible world closer to his spirit. The boy's will stirred with the slowly rising energy of a force at once concentrated and sustained. He stood there like a noble figure in a garden, touched with the glow of the morning, bathed in light, encompassed

with the infinite suggestiveness of a universe in which God's thoughts, sown in the furrows of the sea, the broad stretches of land, the measureless spaces of sky, bloomed in indescribable splendour, and on every wind set loose other seeds which should make fragrant the far limits of the universe. This marvellous world was silent, and he had a voice; this sublime mystery waited for interpretation, and he divined its meaning; this measureless force of life needed other wills and minds and hands, and he waited, eager and impatient, for his place and his task. All things were within his reach; all things summoned him.

'He put forth his hand, and suddenly a throb of pain shot through it, and it fell by his side; he stepped forward, and a swift anguish smote him so that he paused, stunned and uncomprehending. These things were so strange in that fair scene, so much at variance with all he saw and divined, that he paused until they should pass; for they could be but fleeting touches of something alien and intrusive. But the pain did not pass; it became more intense. The anguish did not abate; it grew more bitter. Then, when he began to understand that these terrible things were part of the world, that world grew black and horrible before his eyes; the light pierced and hurt him; the beauty stung and maddened him. He was like one who slowly dies of thirst while the music of running water is in his ears, who slowly starves while fields of waving grain encircle him. In the bitterness of that merciless denial of the claims of his soul for joy and beauty and work he was ready to curse and die; for his life had turned to pain, and the loveliness he saw seemed a dream of madness.

'But he could not die, for he was immortal; nor could he shut out the loveliness of the world, for the image and memory of it lay like a vision in his mind. His will, which would have laid hold of noble tools for noble work, grew strong and stern and steadfast; for the boy, become a smitten and solitary man, was shut off not only from tasks but from fellowship with those who worked. In his loneliness and desolation only the inner voices spoke to him; his companionship was with his own spirit. Presently thoughts began to rise out of the depths of his pain as they had once come to him out of the heart of the beautiful world—thoughts so deep and at times of such awful meaning that they made him forget his pain. And this power to rise out of pain grew with the strength it brought, and became a refuge and comfort to him. And as he suffered, silent and inactive, there came to him slowly the knowledge of that world of sorrow into which he had come; so near the world of beauty and yet seemingly so remote from it and so alien; and in that world he was slowly transformed until he saw with other eyes and heard with other ears.

'When he found that something was being wrought within him he became patient and waited; for new hopes were beginning to stir in his heart and new dreams began to take wing in his imagination. Silent and solitary as he was, these changes were unrecorded and left their traces only in the passing away of despair, the slow incoming of a tenderness, a sympathy, a wistful longing to succour and help, which had had no place in the unconsciousness of his radiant youth. And as the years went by, the tenderness in his soul, born of old-time sorrow, became a passionate impulse, and a great craving awoke within him; and one day he opened his eyes and looked once more, and, behold! the world of his memory had vanished like a dream, and before him lay another world vaster and more awful and more divinely fair, not with the beauty which glows and fades but with that which discloses itself through the revelation of life, with the pressure on the spirit of the shaping hands of care and sorrow and bitter knowledge. And as he looked he was no longer alone, for the world was full of those who stumbled and fell and were heavily burdened and smitten with great infirmities. And he, knowing the bitterness through which they were passing and seeing the end which was invisible to them, rose from his place and raised one and spoke to another; and for those whom he could not reach he lifted up his voice and sang the great song of love that knows not fear, and the song of consolation which follows it like a beautiful echo. Many looked at him, and, seeing on his face the deep lines of such grief as they bore, were comforted; and many listened, and, hearing in his voice those deep tones which come out of great anguish, heeded and were helped. He, meantime, thought not of these things, but, seeing the unspeakable beauty shining more and more clearly through cloud and storm and ugliness, pushed on eager and joyful, a mighty passion of hope and helpfulness moving with him. And when he paused, he suddenly became aware

that he too still suffered; but he had forgotten himself.'

Suffering as Education.

Heb. ii. 10.—'For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.'

It is not every sort of suffering that trains the souls of men. Simple suffering, taken by itself, has never any such educating power; it gets it only by the strength of some end or purpose that is discovered in it. The man who has suffered much and yet who knows nothing of suffering but its pain, is hard and not soft; is selfish, querulous, ungrateful. The blows have beaten his outer nature into a crust to keep the inner life more than ever a prisoner, instead of breaking the outer life to let the inner life forth.

1. What, then, must we put into suffering to make it a true means of education? Two things.

(1) First, *hearty and cordial submission to another's will.* Look at the child who patiently submits because his father says, not, 'You must,' but, 'It is well you should.' Look at the men and women everywhere who have no question after they have found out what God's will is, who simply go and do it, in whatever pain, because they know it must be right and best that His will should be done. In all such cases, where suffering comes out of willing submission to a superior and trusted will, it brings the sufferer into sympathy with the purpose of that will, it demands spiritual enterprise and faith, and so it calls out the better life and educates the soul.

(2) There is another thing which you must add to suffering to make it a means of perfection. It *must be the suffering* not merely of faith, but *of love.* No man attains the highest by what he suffers only for himself. There is not half so much spiritual culture in the pain of fever that tosses on the sick bed, submissive as it may be to God, as in the pain of sleeplessness and anxiety that watches by its side and not merely submits to God, but suffers for love of a fellow-man. All the highest and most educating suffering of the world has been vicarious. It has been the suffering which the sufferer was in no way bound to bear, save as Jesus was bound to die for our sins, 'for his great love wherewith he loved us.'

Put both of these elements in, and then you have the perfect and the perfecting suffering. This is what makes sick-rooms sweet and martyrdoms glorious. The life is not hardened and crusted by the hammer of agony, but broken for the escape of its better and more spiritual portion by the buoyant and elastic blows.

> The sun had hardly risen on my sight
> And given me fairest promise for the day,
> Ere clouds began to drive my hopes away,
> And bring back to the air the chill of night.
> 'Ah, me,' I cried, 'my day that dawned so bright,
> Why must it thus be clouded in an hour;
> Why, ere the bud had time to burst aflower,
> Must it be checked, and never see the light?'
> And then an answer came. It was the sight
> Of One who, tho' He suffered, doubted not;
> Who, tho' a Man of Sorrows, ne'er forgot
> His Father's will, but made it His delight,
> And perfected thro' suffering, looked at me,
> Saying, 'My child, wouldst thou not perfect be?'[1]

2. In the sufferings of Jesus both these elements supremely met.

(1) You know how solicitous He was everywhere to tell the world that He is no volunteer, unauthorized Redeemer, that He is doing what He does in submission to a Great Eternal Will. This is the tone of everything—'Not Mine, but the Father's that sent me.' One meaning of this surely is that Christ, by this continual submission of His will to Deity, was helping forth the Deity in His own nature to full consciousness and power. Even men have felt, when they suffered supremely in submission to God, that their submissive souls sprang into freer sympathy with God and understanding of His plans; what, then, must it have been for Him who was God, self-clouded in humanity for awhile, when, submsisive to the Godhead in His suffering, the cloud broke from Him, and the long exile was finished, and the Divinity of the Son swept through the encumbrance of the human life and laid itself close to the Divinity of the Father!

(2) The other perfecting element of suffering is

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 172.

also plentiful in the suffering of Christ—He suffered for love of others, not of Himself. 'To seek and save that which was lost,' 'To call the sinners to repentance,' 'Lifted up to draw all men unto Him,' 'Lifted up that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life'—take the love for men out of the life of Jesus, and it is as if you had taken the sun out of the sunlight. Does it seem strange to say that it was this suffering for His brethren which softened and unfolded the human life of the Redeemer, that the Divine nature might become more manifest and active? It is but the self-same law which decrees that only when men suffer for other people do they do their best, and bring forth into their own consciousness and into the sight of other men the highest nature that is in them.

It is idle to talk of suffering as if it were the privilege of a few select lives only. Suffering and its culture, like joy and its culture, are within the lot of every man. He lives unworthily whose nature never clashes against the lower natures, and suffers pain. But mere pain is not education, does not bring growth. It is the suffering of willing submission to God and of self-sacrificing love for fellow-men that softens and spiritualizes and blesses us. In all such suffering let us rejoice. We shall not need to seek, opportunities enough for it will meet us everywhere. And may God help us everywhere to find the treasures they contain!

> We take with solemn thankfulness
> Our burden up, nor ask it less,
> And count it joy that even we
> May suffer, serve, or wait for Thee,
> Whose will is done.

Identification.

Heb. ii. 14.—'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.'

In this paragraph from the Epistle to the Hebrews we have a number of astounding statements about the relationship of God to our sinful human life. So rich is the teaching that one hesitates where to begin. Perhaps the keynote of the whole is struck in the sixteenth verse: 'For verily he took hold not of the nature of angels, but of the seed of Abraham.'

1. Here, then, is a great Divine enterprise—the enterprise to take a strong grasp of man. And to take a firm hold God comes as near as He is able, identifies Himself as far as possible with man's lot and condition. There is little in common; and God has to take upon Himself much that appears to us uncongenial to His mind and antagonistic to His nature.

(1) There is *sin*. No shadow of evil has ever blurred the Divine character. Yet in order to make sinful man holy God identifies Himself with his lot, or, as the eleventh verse tells us: 'He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.' 'Of one all' is the brief, decisive, abrupt way in which the original text flashes forth this wonderful fact. They are both of one God, say many commentators, but most likely all of one nature, like a seamless robe all of a piece. Sin—dark, awful, mysterious, disastrous as it is—has not kept God apart from man.

(2) There is *temptation*. God does not know what it is to be tempted. He has never felt the tug of a rebellious desire, or the wrench of a divided will. Yet in Christ He entered into a life exposed to temptations, in order that He might succour and relieve the struggling sons of men. Temptation is no longer a barrier between men and God.

(3) Next, there is *suffering*, a fact which baffles us, and which suggested to the Hebrews all that was sinister and dark. God cannot feel the touch of sorrow or the pang of pain. Yet He became our Captain, and donned the red-stained uniform of our wounded regiment, and was made perfect, or fit to be our Leader, by the sufferings He endured. The dark wall of pain has been clarified into a transparent window of communion.

(4) Last of all there is the dark, cruel shadow universally feared of man—*death*, with its bitter loss and stern inevitability. In our shortsightedness we blindly declare that God cannot die. Yet He tasted death for every man, and even the dark grave is lit up with the resplendent companionship of God.

In all these things He was not ashamed to call them brethren. He gloried in the relationship. He was not ashamed of His poor relatives. He acknowledged them in public: 'Behold I and the children.' And to do this—to avow the relationship, to bear the sufferings, to endure the

temptations, to face the sin, to taste death, to take the needed grasp—He partook of our flesh and blood. He shared the limitation and weaknesses of a human body. He came so near to us as to robe Himself with a material body like our own, so that no condition or position, no privilege or advantage, no affliction or experience could come between us and Himself. This downward movement of God results in the upward movement of man. This humiliation is to bring 'many sons unto glory,' 'to make reconciliation for the sins' of men, and to rob death of its sting. It is to emancipate men from every fear, and to succour them in every temptation, to ease the burden of every affliction, and to secure a triumphant issue for every battle. His the humiliation, ours the exaltation; His the condescension, ours the coronation.

Thine the sharp thorns, mine the golden crown;
Mine the life won, Thine the life laid down.

His the sufferings, ours the privileges. He becomes partaker of our nature, we become partakers of His nature; He becomes one with us, and we become one with Him. By means of the Incarnation He grasps us, by means of the promises great and exceeding precious we grasp Him.

2. When we endeavour to describe the relationship of man to God we can move with reverent confidence because we are exploring the domains of our own experience, but when we seek to describe the relationship of God to man we face an altitude which is dizzy, and a horizon which baffles our vision. We cannot help trying, and we cannot help failing. Our fathers have tried to put the relationship into one fundamental doctrine and one significant faith-testing word. They have tried ransom, and substitution, and many other theological watch-words. To some extent they are all true, and to some extent they are all untrue. We are right in supposing they contain the truth, and we are wrong in supposing they contain all the truth. Ransom, for example, enshrines a precious fact. As the slave is emancipated from his degradation, his torture and his chains, so is man redeemed from the drudgery and captivity of sin. That is a truth too priceless to let go. But the moment we make Christianity a system of ransom, and work out all the implications of the metaphor, and begin to dogmatize as to how the purchase-money was paid to God or the devil, to sin, to righteousness, or to death, we are in the thick of the fog, and the grace of God is wantonly caricatured. It is the same with the doctrine of substitution. Our forefathers lived and struggled and grew and died on it; don't let us suppose it is an error to be light-heartedly despised, or ruthlessly renounced. Jesus died, and His death does save us.

We cannot tell, we may not know
What pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.

But the difficulty comes when we make Christianity a system of substitution, and create a schism in the Godhead by representing the sacrifice of Jesus as mollifying the wrath of an angry God. We want, if possible, a new word, a word of wider amplitude and larger comprehensiveness, a word rich enough, if not to include all the truth, at any rate to exclude all the error. It is as if we were endeavouring to take in by one view a magnificent mountain, mighty in girth and towering in height. We stand underneath its beetling precipices and say, 'That is the mountain.' True, a part of the mountain, but a part so small as to give us a wrong conception of its solid mass and magnificent altitude. We look upon one of its spacious slopes and say, 'That is the mountain.' No, only a partial aspect of it. What we want is a standpoint that will take it all in, in its girth as well as in its glory, in its mass as well as in its sublimity. The finest standpoint is the standpoint of the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews: IDENTIFICATION—atonement in the literal meaning of the word.

(1) Identification includes the Incarnation. 'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.' As a social reformer like Edward Denison forsakes Oxford with its culture and the West-end with its comfort and ease, and voluntarily seeks the East-end with its squalor and sin, dwelling amongst the people, living in their homes, breathing the poison-laden air of their streets, becoming one with them in discomfort and deprivation, and with rare self-denial living their sad, hum-drum, mutilated lives,

so God in Christ took upon Himself our flesh and blood, tenanted our mortal body, moved along the streets of our commonplace lives, shared our outlook and limitation, made our losses His loss and our pain His pain, and identified Himself as far as possible with our lot and destiny. He was born as we are born. He grew as we grow. He hungered as we hunger. He thirsted as we thirst. He was weary with human weariness, and limited by human wants. He looked out upon the world with human eyes, heard its cries with human ears, and felt for its sorrows with a human heart. He knew the peasant's home, the carpenter's shop, and the simple annals of the poor. His feet trod human pathways, His hands plied human tasks and His shoulders ached with human toil. He knew our dialect and talked in the mother tongue of our race. He was the son of Mary, the apprentice of Joseph, the brother of James, and the countryman of the world.

> In the shop of Nazareth
> Pungent cedar haunts the breath.
> 'Tis a low Eastern room,
> Windowless, touched with gloom.
> Workman's bench and simple tools
> Line the walls. Chests and stools,
> Yoke of ox, and shaft of plow,
> Finished by the Carpenter,
> Lie about the pavement now.
> In the room the Craftsman stands,
> Stands and reaches out His hands.

(2) Such an identification means co-partnership in temptation and joint exposure to all the gradations and inflections of suffering and sorrow and loss. Human life has its sunshine; it also has its shades. Christ delighted in its brightness, but He also passed through all its shadows. He was tempted in all points as we are tempted. Not that He was ever a merchant or a statesman or husband or father, but at all the critical points of the soul where temptation storms and besieges, where it attacks by force or by guile, He experienced the full pressure of its onset. You cannot tell anything new or strange to Him about temptation. He has been in the thickest of the fight and knows about it all. Then His body was like our own, with nerves sensitive to every kind of pain and agony. His life was a life woven of human relationships, liable to be cruelly wrenched and even wantonly snapped. From the heights of omniscience God must always know what man has to suffer and bear,but in Christ He experimentally, feelingly knows, knows through the touch and bite of actual experience. 'In all our affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved us.' What injures us injures Him. What we feel He feels, only with a greater intensity and keener pain. Stephen Phillips has a daring poem called 'The Wound.' A man who has lost an only child enters heaven, and when he unbares his sorrow 'a strange disturbance on the spirits came, and even a dimness on the face of God.' Then our Lord shows him His branded brow and pierced hands, but the man reverently replies, 'Thy wounds are many, but Thou hadst no child.' He was wrong, for Christ knew the grief of an aching, hungering heart. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.' His was the attitude of the mother bird, and no mother wept with more genuine grief over the dead body of her child than He did through bereavement for lost souls. More than that, God is so tied up with human life, is so identified with human experience, is so implicated in our grief that our loss is His loss and our sorrow His sorrow. We cannot interpret Divine love otherwise. Selfishness looks out for what is best in others; love for what is lowest and poorest. Selfishness discovers the strongest, but love seeks the weakest link in all the chain. The mother's love is concentrated on the most helpless child; the teacher's care is devoted to the weakest scholar at his weakest point, and the love and the care of the God who is mother as well as father, who is teacher as well as Saviour, is focussed upon the weakest of His children and identified with their need and their woe. God is where the glory is brightest, the praise is purest, the heart is holiest; but, blessed be the holy name of Jesus, He is also where the pain is keenest, where the burden is heaviest, where the sorrow is darkest, and where the need is greatest.

> When the lights of life are gleaming,
> Where its blossoms bud and bloom,
> When each brow is bound with roses,
> As we bask in their perfume;

Just beyond the smiles and sunshine,
All unseen the Master stands,
Waiting ever, ever waiting,
Holding out His pierced hands.

When the lights of life are darkened,
As its flowers fall and fade,
And we watch our loved ones vanish
Thro' the silence and the shade:
Then the Master draweth nearer,
Thro' the circling shadow lands;
Waiting ever, ever waiting,
Holding out His pierced hands.

(3) Identification also covers the Atonement, into which the Incarnation blossoms and ripens. It may be perfectly true to say that there is no satisfactory theory of the Atonement, that there is no view which adequately and worthily expresses the relationship of the death of Christ to sin and to righteousness, to God and to man. The thought of our text—the category of identification—comes nearer to the ideal than any. While on the one hand it has the merit of never betraying us into casting discredit on the character of God, on the other it contains the vital truth that it is needed for our emancipation and reconstruction. Jesus identified Himself with a humanity which was grievously suffering on account of its disobedience and sin, and to share the life of such a race was to share its lot. In order to lead us out of our guilt and iniquity He took upon Himself the woeful heritage of the world's disobedience; and it could not be otherwise, for if He entered into our life He could not but draw upon Himself the results of our misbehaviour. To become a man was to become a sufferer; to breathe our air was to breathe the poison in it; to be born was to die. Bethlehem implied Calvary, the Cross was in the manger, and the Garden was in the inn. It was not a passive atonement, but an active process of identification. Christ was not a meek, suffering victim, but an heroic priest. The whole movement was a spiritual enterprise, a venture of redeeming grace. Jesus gathered unto Himself all the loving energy of God, and plunged into the dark waters to rescue struggling humanity. Such a view in no way exhausts the meaning of His death, but it has made all the difference in the world to us. If Jesus had not lived and died, it would be too awful to contemplate the disasters that would have befallen the race. But He has lived and He has died, and we meet together in a place of worship to praise His name; with our penitence quickened; with our faith challenged; the terror of sin gone; the smile of God assured; the forgiveness of sin a gracious fact; the future radiant with promise; and the gates of heaven open wide with holy welcome, and our sainted dead waiting in joy inexpressible to greet us in the home of God.

3. This identification means a sacrifice unspeakably great and sublime. It was not an easy thing for God to become one with us. We hear the echoes of the strain and the travail in the words of our Lord: 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' 'And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and the sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' Through these incidental glimpses into the inner life of Christ we see something of the struggle and burden and anguish of redemption. How could it be otherwise for the Holy God to come into contact with the sin from which His whole character recoiled; for Him to be exposed to mockery and vilification, to ignominy and shame; for Him to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; for Him to become a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief? It is not argument we want, but insight.

During one of those spiritual quickenings that occasionally visit us, when the clouds lift and the great spiritual hills stand clear and real, heart-breaking and awe-inspiring, a brilliant theological lecturer proceeded to address his class on theories of the Atonement. He had not gone far before the meaning and pathos and cost of it became real, and professor and students broke down at the foot of the Cross. They gave up discussing and saw. Oh! to see the travail, to gauge the cost, to value the sacrifice! 'He tasted death for every man.' It is through His sweat and bloody agony that He identified Himself with man.

4. But God counts this to be His glory. 'It became him.' It was like Him, worthy of Him. 'It behoved him.' Being what He was He could not do otherwise. God counts it to be His greatest glory to redeem man at a great cost.

'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.' He counts it worth while, He is satisfied with the result of the outlay. All throughout the New Testament Jesus seldom speaks of His death as humiliation. It is the Apostle Paul who does that. Christ's word is glorification. 'The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified,' not humiliated. So great is His love that He does not count sacrifice to be sacrifice, for it is His glory to do this for humanity. We are glad to find this wonderful note in the character of God; if it had been absent, God could be no God at all. The mother suffers for her ailing child; deprives herself of her ease and comfort; works herself to a skeleton; literally gives up her life that her child may live. The hero forgets everything and risks all for the sake of his cause; and we are not going to believe that the noblest mother in the world or the bravest hero in the land is in any particular better than God. Nay; God must have in Him the self-sacrifice of all the mothers that ever lived and the heroism of all the heroes that have ever dared; and even that is but a drop in the infinite stores of His redeeming love. So we are glad to find that it became Him, that it was worthy of Him, by His sacrificial act of redeeming grace to identity Himself with man. Our mighty Saviour has on His head many crowns, and He is royally worthy of them all. But the crown which rests most becomingly on His temple, the crown which gleams most resplendently on His brow, the crown of which He himself is proudest, is the crown of redemption. 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.'

The Slanderer.

Heb. ii. 14.—'That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil'.

THE word *diabolos,* 'devil,' is never used in the New Testament without a direct reference to its derivation and meaning. There are other words, the Tempter, the Adversary, the Destroyer, which all point to the spirit of evil; but they denote him by different characteristics, each of which we have need to remember, and which we should not mix carelessly together. The Accuser, or Slanderer of God and of the brethren, is the title which belongs to this passage. We shall not enter into the sense of it if we substitute any other title for that.

1. Now whatever our theories are about the existence or non-existence of an evil will, about the personality or impersonality of that will, about the influence of that will upon us, we all know, as a matter of fact, that whispers do come to us—certainly brought from no visible lips—which take the form of accusations, cruel and malignant accusations, against persons who may, or may not, have done us wrong; who may be our enemies, or who may be very dear to us. All the suspicions and questions which have been brought into men's brains and hearts, and which have destroyed the peace of their lives, even if there has been some conspiring human demon, some Iago or Iachimo, to strike the spark, to light the tinder, have yet—we feel it, and we confess it by a hundred phrases—a deeper source, we say it is within us, and we say rightly; but yet we know that down in those depths which the vulture's eye has not seen there is a slanderous voice speaking to us—suggesting thoughts which we did not originate, which we shrink from, which, being rejected, return again; which may cause most anguish and torment to those who most resolutely defy them. The Scripture explains these facts by telling us of an Accuser of the brethren, of one who seeks to divide us from each other; and we accept this statement, not trying to get rid of it by any analyses or refinements, because we can find no other which accounts so well for an awful individual experience, or so well connects it with that which goes on in every man.

2. But the same secret whispers which seek to set a man at war with his neighbours, strive also to set him at war with himself. The discontents, the terrible visions of the past and of the future, which every man has been conscious of—which seem to many as if they made up the sum of their existence—whence do they come? At first we think from without. We attribute them to any annoying circumstance, to any disagreeable fellow-creature. The same discoveries, which we cannot be deceived in, bring them nearer home. They

must have more to do with us than with anything about us. They seem to move from us, and yet towards us. There springs up in us, we cannot tell whence, a desire to be freed from this state of mind, this self-torment. But the moment the effort at reformation begins, there begins a suggestion of discouragement and despair. The evil that has been done is brought against us; the evil that is with us still is brought against us. Both are arguments why we cannot obtain freedom, why we should not crave for it. Is this accusation from ourselves? Is it from conscience? Conscience must be much mixed up with it. But conscience cannot be an enemy of reformation—cannot bid us continue in evil. It must be one who is perverting all the witnesses of conscience, who is using them to keep us from ever being what conscience says we ought to become. It must be an accuser, a slanderer; not one clothed in flesh and bones, but a spirit.

3. There is one more discovery to be made. This spirit is the slanderer and accuser, not only of our brethren, not only of ourselves, but of God. Is it not so? Are not we hearing Him accused every moment of the day? Is not every feeling of pain turned into an argument that the Ruler of the world has an ill-will to us? Is not every comfort a proof that He is leading us into temptation? Is not the sin of some men a proof that He has created them to perish? Is not the righteousness of some men a proof that He is partial? Is not that sense of evil in ourselves a proof that He has woven nets about us from which we cannot escape, that He may have the pleasure of destroying us? Is not that consciousness of inability to escape from an evil a proof that He has sentenced us to inevitable bondage? We know that we have had thoughts of this kind, that they come back to us continually, sometimes nakedly, sometimes in fine court dresses. We know from their words and their acts that it is the same with all who belong to our race. Is there not an accuser of God with them continually?

In the *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice* there is a letter to Hort on the devil as slanderer which expresses the view of an advanced thinker of a generation ago. 'You think you do not find a distinct recognition of the devil's personality in my books. I am sorry if it is so. I am afraid I have been corrupted by speaking to a polite congregation. I do agree with my dear friend Charles Kingsley, and admire him for the boldness with which he has said that the devil is shamming dead, but that he never was busier than now. I do not know what he is by theological arguments, but I know by what I feel. I am sure there is one near me accusing God and my brethren to me. He is not myself; I should go mad if I thought he was. He is near my neighbours; I am sure he is not identical with my neighbours. I must hate them if I believed he was. But oh! most of all, I am horror-struck at the thought that we may confound him with God; the perfect darkness with the perfect light. I dare not deny that it is an evil will that tempts me; else I should begin to think evil is in God's creation, and is not the revolt from God, resistance to Him. If he is an evil will, he must, I think, be a person. The Word upholds his existence, not his evil. That is in himself; that is the mysterious, awful possibility implied in his being a will. I need scarcely say that I do not mean by this acknowledgment of an evil *spirit* that I acknowledge a *material* devil. But does anyone?'

THE FEAR OF DEATH.

Heb. ii. 14, 15.—'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.'

THERE are few passages in modern literature that are more impressive than the passage in his *History of the French Revolution* in which Carlyle describes the fear of death. It gains much of its impressiveness from its setting. Louis XV., Louis the magnificent, is on his deathbed. 'There are nods and sagacious glances; go-betweens, silk dowagers mysteriously gliding, with smiles for this constellation, sighs for that: there is tremor, of hope or desperation, in several hearts. There

is the pale grinning Shadow of Death, ceremoniously ushered along by another grinning Shadow, of Etiquette; at intervals the growl of Chapel Organs, like prayer by machinery; proclaiming, as in a kind of horrid diabolic horse-laughter, *Vanity of vanities, all is Vanity!* Poor Louis! With these it is a hollow phantasmagory, where like mimes they mope and mowl, and utter false sounds for hire; but with thee it is frightful earnest.'

And then Carlyle breaks into the memorable words: 'Frightful to all men is Death; from of old named King of Terrors. Our little compact home of an Existence, where we dwell complaining, yet as in a home, is passing, in dark agonies, into an Unknown of Separation, Foreignness, unconditioned Possibility. The Heathen Emperor asks of his soul: Into what Places art thou now departing? The Catholic King must answer: To the Judgment-bar of the Most High God! Yes, it is a summing-up of Life; a final settling, and giving-in the account of the deeds done in the body; they are done now; and lie there unalterable; and do bear their fruits, long as Eternity shall last.' [1]

I.

Thus Carlyle agrees with the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews both as to the fact of the fear of death and as to the extent of it. 'Frightful to all men is death,' says Carlyle; 'who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage,' says the Epistle. The writer does not assert that the fear of death is present and active in all men every moment of their lives. To say that would be exaggeration, and would be untrue to the plain facts of life. When a man is in the enjoyment of good health, he very rarely thinks of death at all. When the world goes well with him and he is happy, he has the trick of forgetting he is mortal. He digs his graves within the garden walls, and covers them with a wealth of summer flowers, so that the eye scarce notices the mound when the birds are singing in the trees.

But the fact of death, and to some degree the fear of it, are always with us. 'For us,' says Maeterlinck, 'death is the one event that counts in our life and in our universe. It is the point whereat all that escapes our vigilance unites and conspires against our happiness. The more our thoughts struggle to turn away from it, the closer do they press around it. The more we dread it, the more dreadful it becomes, for it but thrives on our fears. He who seeks to forget it has his memory filled with it; he who tries to shun it meets naught else.' [1]

> . . . Like one that on a lonesome road
> Doth walk in fear and dread,
> And having once turn'd round, walks on,
> And turns no more his head;
> Because he knows a frightful fiend
> Doth close behind him tread. . . .[2]

In Boswell's *Life of Johnson* we find this conversation: *Boswell:* 'But is not the fear of death natural to man?' *Johnson:* 'So much so, Sir, that the whole of life is but keeping away the thoughts of it.' [3]

With Johnson himself the fear of death was always present, and he was often painfully conscious of it. In his last illness he wrote to his friend Dr. Taylor: 'Oh! my friend, the approach of death is very dreadful. I am afraid to think on that which I know I cannot avoid. It is vain to look round and round for that help which cannot be had.'

And many another has confessed to a like fear. Manning writes in his Diary: 'I have always had a great fear of death.' [4] Dr. Illingworth, his wife records, often said, 'The fear of death is always before me,' and he suffered much in consequence.

> Scarce tolerable life, which all life long
> Is dominated by one dread of death;
> Is such life, life? If so, who pondereth
> May call salt sweetness or call discord song.
> Ah me, this solitude where swarms a throng!
> Life slowly grows and dwindles breath by breath;
> Death slowly grows on us; no word it saith,
> Its cords all lengthened and its pillars strong.

[1] Carlyle, *French Revolution*, i. 16f.

[1] *Our Eternity*, 4.

[2] Coleridge, *The Ancient Mariner*.

[3] ii. 96.

[4] Shane Leslie's *Life and Labours of H. E. Manning*, 164.

Life dies apace, a life that but deceives:
Death reigns as tho' it lived, and yet is dead:
Where is the life that dies not but that lives?
The sweet long life, immortal, ever young,
True life that woos us with a silver tongue
Of hope, much said and much more left unsaid.[1]

So sings Christina Rossetti, nervous, highly strung, sensitive, as Illingworth, and often under the waves.

But even from less emotional men and women the fear of death is rarely quite absent. Despite all avoidance of speech, it is not really ignored in their hearts. How can it be when scarcely a day passes which does not remind us of the fact of death?

Just when we're safest, there's a sunset touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus ending from Euripides,
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears.

How can it be when death is continually intruding into the circle of our acquaintances, our friends, our relations, our own families? How can it be when everyone knows that, sooner or later, nearer or further, death waits for him—the one absolutely inevitable, unescapable fact? We may come to terms with some of our troubles—medical and surgical science is able to do miracles nowadays in the way of alleviating physical pain; we are able to divert our minds or steel our hearts when sorrows come; but there is no making terms with death. Our subterfuges and evasions and attempts to escape avail us nothing. Death is a tremendous and terrible fact which we have all of us to face and meet. And to know that death awaits us, inevitable, unavoidable, unescapable, though we know not where it lurks or when it may smite us down—to know all that without being able to face death, whenever and wherever it may meet us, with a brave and cheerful heart is simply to be all our lifetime subject to bondage, to be the slaves all our days of a paralysing fear.

II.

If you ask men what they are afraid of you will find that they rarely can tell you. Can you tell yourself?

[1] Christina Rossetti, *Verses*, 201

1. With some, no doubt, it is simply the physical act of dying. And this, according to the testimony of doctors, seems to be an unnecessary fear. In February, 1914, an interesting correspondence took place in the columns of the *Times* as to whether the act of death is associated with physical pain. Much interesting evidence was offered from many quarters. One letter was from Professor J. Cook Wilson, who described the terrible respiratory struggles of his father, when dying from cardiac failure supervening on influenza. The harrowing struggles of the dying man were apparently so painful that his son could hardly believe the assurance of the medical attendants that the patient knew nothing of them. After several hours, passed apparently in intense agony, the patient woke up, and volunteered the statement that he had spent a comfortable night. This was an unexpected but very gratifying corroboration of the physicians' opinion. Another correspondent contributed a personal experience. He had narrowly escaped death from typhoid fever in a mining camp in Mexico, and after his recovery he was informed by his friends that in his delirium he had shrieked and fought as though suffering untold agonies. As a matter of fact he had, all the while, been entirely free from pain, anxiety, or fear.

But apart from the question of actual bodily pain, it appears that the fear of death itself passes away before the event occurs, even when it has been acute and lifelong. Dr. R. W. Mackenna, who quotes those cases, says of his own experience: 'I have watched by the bedside of the dying of many classes and of all ages. I have seen the little silken thread on which a child's life hung—a life, so far as one could tell, of infinite potentialities for good—snap suddenly, leaving only a terrible sense of the mystery and inscrutableness of it all; and I have fought with death, and lost the battle, over the beds of young men and women in the first flush of maturity; I have seen strong men and women cut down in their prime; I have watched the old totter down the slope into the twilight, and at the end fall asleep like little children, and I say it with a due sense of the importance of the statement, that my experience has been that, however much men and women may, when in the full vigour of health, fear death, when their hour approaches the fear is almost invariably lulled into

quietness, and they face the end with calmness and a serene mind.' [1]

Mr. A. C. Benson had an experience of his own which he records in this way: 'Once, in a moment of perfect health, in the Alps, I came very near to death indeed in a crevasse. I was rescued only just in time, after swimming faintly away in my expiring breath. I certainly had no sense of fear; and stranger still, on recovering, my first thought was not of relief, but of unwillingness to be recalled to life. It seemed all over and done with, and I seemed caught back from something even more real than life.' [2]

2. But the fear of death is not simply fear of the act of dying. It is more, and more mysterious, than that. There appeared lately an article in the *Times* of which the title was 'The Fear of the Infinite.' The article did not discuss the fear of death, but its title is expressive of what that fear is. Death takes men away from the world they know and love and launches them into the unknown. We love the familiar; we instinctively fear the strange. 'To die,' says Peter Pan, 'will be a dreadfully big adventure.' We do not shrink from adventure, but it is the mystery of this adventure, the bigness of it, that appals us. There is, says Maeterlinck, 'but one terror particular to death: that of the unknown into which it hurls us.' [3]

Death carries us away from all that is familiar to us, and most of all from those who are near and dear. Deep within us, though we may not acknowledge it, there is that factor in the fear of death—the passionate clinging of the human heart to the only life it has known. We have grown familiar with it in the years. It has come to look on us with friendly eyes. It has been a glad thing to have our work to do, and human love and friendship have been sweet. And then comes death, and takes all that away from us, and says it never shall be ours again, and we brood on it, and are lonely and afraid. Says John Pulsford:

> To me the thought of death is terrible,
> Having such hold on life. [4]

3. The fear of death is often due less to the dread of the unknown before than to the sense of separation from those who are left behind. It was not fear of the unknown future that forced from the lips of Charlotte Brontë, whose ears had caught some whispered petition that God would spare her, the pathetic cry, 'Oh! I am not going to die, am I? He will not separate us, we have been so happy.'

After one of his great evangelistic campaigns in Britain Mr. Moody sailed for America. A few days at sea, and the ship's shaft had broken and it was sinking. 'I was passing,' he says, through a new experience. I had thought myself superior to the fear of death. I had often preached on the subject, and urged Christians to realise this victory of faith. During the Civil War I had been under fire without fear. I was in Chicago during the great cholera epidemic, and went round with the doctors visiting the sick and dying; where they could go to look after the bodies of men, I said I could go to look after their souls. I remember a case of smallpox where the sufferer's condition was beyond description; yet I went to the bedside of that poor sufferer again and again, with Bible and prayer, for Jesus' sake. In all this I had no fear of death. But on the sinking ship it was different. There was no cloud between my soul and my Saviour. I knew my sins had been put away, and that if I died there it would only be to wake up in heaven. That was all settled long ago. But as my thoughts went out to my beloved ones at home—my wife, my children, my friends on both sides of the sea, the schools and all the interests so dear to me—and as I realised that perhaps the next hour would separate me for ever from all these, so far as this world was concerned, I confess it almost broke me down. It was the darkest hour of my life.' [1]

4. But no doubt the most acute element in the fear of death, when it is present—and from whom is it wholly absent?—is the fear of the future, 'the dread of something after death.' Archibald Forbes, the famous war correspondent, once said to Bishop Browne of Bristol, 'I have been with troops of all nationalities on the eve of battle. They are all in a funk, not of battle but of the next world, except the Turks. Till you gentle-

[1] R. W. Mackenna, *The Adventure of death*, 63.
[2] A. C. Benson, *Thy Rod and Thy Staff*, 223.
[3] *Our Eternity*, 19.
[4] *Quiet Hours*, 181.

[1] W. R. Moody, *The Life of D. L. Moody*, 351.

men in black abolish hell, your men will never fight as the Turks do.'[1]

Yes, if the gentlemen in black *could* abolish hell. But the soldier and the civilian know, just as well as the clergyman, that 'first cometh death and after that the judgment.' Conscience tells it. The very thought of a just God demands it. Unless there be a judgment still to come, life is the most tragical of mockeries. And every voice of antiquity proclaims it, and every savage tribe within the forest; and with a certainty that never wavered it was proclaimed by the Lord Jesus Christ. Seen to our depths, with every secret known, we are all to stand before Almighty God. Kings will be there, and peasants will be there. And the rich and the poor will meet together there, for the Lord is the maker of them all. It is that thought which makes death so terrible to most of us.

III.

But now we come to the confident, magnificently confident, assertion of the writer of our Epistle. Christ, he says, delivered 'them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' And how does he say Christ did it? By dying. His words are 'through death.' It is the mystery of mysteries. It is also the gospel of gospels.

1. First of all it means that if men had to die He also had to die. The children being partakers of flesh and blood, He also shared the same; and flesh and blood is subject to death; He also therefore 'became obedient to death.' God did not impose one such awful experience as death upon us and escape it Himself. It is told of General Gordon that 'in the Crimea he came upon a corporal who had ordered a man to stand on the parapet to do some necessary repairs, the man all the time being exposed to the fire of the enemy, while the corporal himself was under cover. Gordon jumped to the parapet, called the corporal to join him, remained until the work was completed, in spite of the fire of the Russians, and then said to the corporal, "Never order a man to do anything you are afraid to do yourself."' Neither has God asked us to do what He was not willing to do Himself. God Himself as Christ came to earth and submitted Himself to death. That is the first fact.

2. And that is all that some men find in it. Jesus, they say, was mortal, and to Him as to all men 'death cometh soon or late.' But they ignore this fact, that Jesus, unlike other men, consciously and voluntarily took our nature upon Him. Death was not inevitable until that act was willed and done. And even then, if death had to come, it was not merely the dissolution of the physical body. If that had been all, why should He shrink from it? Why should it cost Him 'great drops of blood falling down to the ground'? Men have faced death fearlessly. They have steeled their will and stood up to it undaunted.

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe:
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go;
For the journey is done and the summit attain'd,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gain'd,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes and forbore,
And bade me creep past.

We might even say that it was easier for Jesus than for other men to face this foe. For He knew what is beyond death. The pain of parting was there, but not the more pressing pain of ignorance. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross. He knew what the joy is.

3. But the destruction of death is not due to the simple fact that Jesus died. Nor is it due merely to the fact that He died for others. It is due to the fact that He who died is the Son of God incarnate. This is the point of all that the writer of this great Epistle has to say. He contrasts Jesus with Moses. Now Moses, on a certain

[1] G. F. Browne, *The Recollections of a Bishop*, 30.

memorable occasion, was ready to offer his life for his people. Yet that sacrifice, if it had been accepted, would not have delivered the Israelites in the wilderness from the fear of death. Moses was a servant and a faithful one, but Jesus is a Son. 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' It is as Son that He lives His life and dies His death. He is one with the Father. And when He gives His life God is 'in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself,' not imputing unto men their trespasses. The sting of death is sin, and when the sin is forgiven, 'not imputed,' the sting is gone. 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

(1) Is it the physical pain that we fear? We need not fear, because Christ will be with us in the midst of it, not simply to sympathize with us, but really to give us grace to bear it. That was one reason why He Himself endured all the pains of death, that He might be able to sympathize perfectly with mortal men. But He does more than sympathize. He is the living and present Lord; He gives us His presence and power. There is a touching story told of a wounded lad in the American Civil War, who thought he could face the end if only the President would hold his hand; and Abraham Lincoln went and sat by the lad's bedside and tenderly kept his hand in his own until he had accomplished his journey. But there is no help so effectual as that of the presence of Christ. Men can do anything, and bear anything, with Him to strengthen them. And thus, by His real and holy Presence, He takes away the fear of the pain of dying. 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.'

(2) Is it the unknown that we fear? Christ by dying for us has delivered us from that fear. For He has revealed to us what lies beyond the bourne of time. He went down to the gates of death and passed through them, and then for a brief space He came back in order to release us from our fears by telling us what lies on the other side. First of all, He tells us that there *is* another side. It is not into extinction and nothingness we pass when the soul leaves the body; there is a Beyond; there is a Hereafter; there is a Life to come. Then, further, He tells us that the Beyond is a fairer, richer, happier world than this. Life not only does not cease, it becomes deeper, fuller, gladder. What happens when we strike the tent of our earthly life? We find waiting for us a building, 'a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' Whither do we go when we leave this familiar world? We go to the place prepared for us in the Father's house of many mansions, whither many of our loved and dear have already preceded us. And by making men sure of this, Christ has completely delivered from all fear of death those who have believed His word. So completely has He done this that they have even hoped for the end to come in order that they might enter upon that larger and better life. 'Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better,' says St. Paul. 'Come quickly, Lord Jesus,' cries St. John. Christ had clean delivered them from that fear of death which is begotten of the sense of the unknown, by revealing to them the life of power and opportunity and blessedness that waited for them on the other side. And so He delivers men still. Mr. Ready-to-Halt was a timid pilgrim. But the last words he was heard to say as he went down to the river were, 'Welcome life, welcome life!' Jesus by His dying and rising again has for ever delivered men from this particular fear. For though they cannot see, they are verily sure that after death comes the 'land of pure delight, where saints immortal reign.'

(3) Is it the judgment to come that we dread? Christ delivers men from this fear, by delivering them from the sin which is the cause of it. Through death, He brought to nought him that had the power of death—that is, the devil. He robbed him of his weapons. He rendered him helpless. He could no longer use men's sins to torture and terrify their souls. For our Lord by His own dying took away sin. He cancelled it, He blotted it out. Sin has no more to say to us. And by so doing He took the 'sting' out of death. By setting man's conscience free from guilt, He set his heart free from fear. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' There is no longer any 'law' to accuse them, there is no longer any judgment to fear.

They have been cleansed and loosed from sin. They have boldness at the judgment, for they know that great day will bring them not doom and destruction but the crown of eternal life.

IV.

What is the evidence? If in Christ we are delivered from the fear of death there ought to be clear proof of it, seen in the life and in the death of those that are His. Is there such proof?

1. One thing is undeniable and it is very significant. The common popular attitude to death is different since Christ came. When men thought of death in the classical ages, they thought generally, with what resignation they could, of a state of gloom and unreality in which life and hope were left behind. Their prevailing impression is expressed by Newman in his song 'Heathen Greece':

> What the low beach and silent gloom
> And chilling mists of that dull river,
> Along whose banks the thin ghosts shiver—
> The thin wan ghosts that once were men.[1]

Walter Pater gives us an impression of the strangely new attitude towards death which Christianity brought to men, as Marius the Epicurean caught a glimpse of it on visiting a Christian cemetery: 'Peace! Pax! Pax tecum! —the word, the thought, was put forth everywhere, with images of hope. . . . The shepherd with his sheep, the shepherd carrying the sick lamb upon his shoulders. Yet these imageries after all, it must be confessed, formed but a slight contribution to the dominant effect of tranquil hope there—a kind of heroic cheerfulness and grateful expansion of heart, as with the sense, again, of some real deliverance, which seemed to deepen the longer one lingered through these strange and awful passages.'[2]

2. But above and beyond this general attitude, there is frequently found a sense of victory in the presence of death, sometimes a spiritual exaltation, which to a pagan would have been as incomprehensible as it was impossible. There is a familiar example in the life of Wesley. On the way to America (his first voyage) he found among the passengers a little group of Moravian exiles, who, by the simplicity and seriousness of their piety, strangely interested him. A storm broke over the ship one evening just as these simple-minded Germans had begun a religious service. Wesley describes what follows: 'In the midst of the Psalm wherewith their service began, the sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began amongst the English. The Germans calmly sang on. I asked one of them afterwards, "Were you not afraid?" He answered, "I thank God, no." I asked, "But were not your women and children afraid?" He replied mildly, "No; our women and children are not afraid to die." From them I went to their crying trembling neighbours, and pointed out to them the difference in the hour of trial between him that feareth God and him that feareth Him not.'[1]

From the lives of the Saints of the Roman Church many examples might be quoted, but none more to the point than that of the great Teresa herself. 'The fear of death, also, was now very slight in me, who had always been in great dread of it; now it seems to me that death is a very light thing for one who serves God, because the soul is in a moment delivered thereby out of its prison, and at rest. This elevation of the spirit, and the vision of things so high in these trances, seem to me to have a great likeness to the flight of the soul from the body, in that it finds itself in a moment in the possession of these good things. We put aside the agonies of its dissolution, of which no great account is to be made; for they who love God in truth, and are utterly detached from the things of this life, must die with the greater sweetness.'[2]

But the believing Protestant is not one whit behind. Take the whole family of Frank Crossley, the engineer, whose story has been told by Dr. Rendel Harris. Major Crossley, the father, when he was dying, exclaimed, 'Is this death? Why, this is nothing!' Fanny Crossley, the aunt, in her illness saw her departed sisters in the room:

[1] *Verses on Various Occasions*, 305.
[2] *Marius the Epicurean*, ii. 77.

[1] W. H. Fitchett, *Wesley and his Century*, 99.
[2] *The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus*, 375.

'How can anyone call it a dark valley? It is all light and love!' Then, stretching out her hands to Christ, she whispered, 'I could *run* to meet Him!' Frank Crossley himself said in dying that he had come to the River, and *there was no River*.

One of the most striking examples in recent literature is that of Mrs. Acklom as described by Catherine Marsh in a letter to Mr. Gladstone: 'I have wished much to tell you about my beloved friend, Mrs. Acklom—you will remember her as Marianne Fellowes. I was with her day and night for some little time before the end came, and can never recall it without thanking God for letting me be with her. She was as charming in her way of dying as of living. Her pleasant wit sparkled like jewels, and she seemed as content and happy in the midst of her terrible sufferings as a child in its mother's arms. Yet her soul was filled with holy reverence for the faith which was her life—or rather for Him from Whose living Heart she drew, without ceasing, the strength and freshness of her own. I think she saw the shining ones who came down to the further side of the river to welcome her, as clearly as Christian and Hopeful could see their friends in that delightful story which she loved to the last. Just a little while before she died I said to her, 'Now that you are so far down into the waters have you any fear?' 'Fear,' she answered, lifting up her wonderful eyes for the last time, 'how can I? Jesus has redeemed me, done everything for me. He has led me all my life long—and shall I be afraid to cross a little dark passage with Him?'[1]

3. This emotion of irrepressible joy may be partly temperamental; but temperament never gave it to one who did not love the Lord Jesus Christ. If it is not common the fault is surely our own. Do we 'practise the presence of Christ'?—to use the phrase of Brother Lawrence. Do we exercise faith? And do we add to our faith prayer? We are told that to ordinary people the victory over death is really not possible—that must be left to the saint. It is the old story over again: Christianity will not work and therefore Christianity has failed. But Christianity has not failed; it is we who fail to practise it.

Park Orator—'Christianity is a failure. It has been in existence for two thousand years and how few real Christians there are.'

Man in the Crowd—'Water has been in existence for two millions of years and yet you would be none the worse of a wash.'

(1) 'There are sundry things,' says John Owen, 'required of us, that we may be able to encounter death cheerfully, constantly, and victoriously. For want of these, or some of them, I have known gracious souls who have lived in a kind of bondage for fear of death all their days. We know not how God will manage any of our minds and souls in that season, in that trial; for he acts towards us in all such things in a way of sovereignty. But these are the things which he requireth of us in a way of duty.' And then he names first and chiefly what he calls 'peculiar actings of faith'—'First, Peculiar actings of faith to resign and commit our departing souls into the hand of him who is able to receive them, to keep and preserve them, as also to dispose of them into a state of rest and blessedness, are required of us.'[1] And if Owen is too ancient, take H. G. Wells,[2] surely modern enough both in thought and language. 'For him who has faith, death, so far as it is his own death, ceases to possess any quality of terror. The experiment will be over, the rinsed beaker returned to its shelf, the crystals gone dissolving down the waste-pipe; the duster sweeps the bench.' The witness is the same.

(2) To faith add prayer. Dr. Maclean and Dr. Sclater, in their arresting war book *God and the Soldier*, record this testimony of a soldier: 'The Boche began to shell heavily with a high explosive—"whizbangs" (a most annoying shell)—and machine guns from various points swept the trench. You can stand anything if you are on the move, but a stoppage occurred in front, and we had to halt. The trench was overcrowded. Death was everywhere—under the feet the putrefying dead, and in the air and all around, death. And then the barrage settled down on the part of the trench where I was. It was horrible.

[1] L. E. O'Rorke, *The Life and Friendships of Catherine Marsh*, 236.

[1] J. Moffatt, *The Golden Book of John Owen*, 113.
[2] *First and Last Things*, 226.

It wasn't my first experience—but it was by far the worst. And you never got used to that hell.

'It was then that my queer experience came. I happened to look into the face of a brother officer (a white man if ever there was one), and with more bravado than merriment, I screwed my lips into what I hoped was a smile. And in that act there arose within me an unconscious appeal to the Highest. That appeal was urgent. Though I am not a religious man, I believe certain things—the things that matter. My appeal was that the Power over all and within me should back me up in the effort that produced that smile. Instantly something happened. . . . Shells still burst all around, with smoke and an incredible roar everywhere. The crack, crack, of machine guns until the air was a sheet of bullets; the earth blasted and thrown high into the air—that was what girt me around. But these things were no longer real. As a dreamer awakes from a ghastly nightmare, and, while the horror is still upon him, is suddenly comforted by the knowledge that it was only a dream, so, all at once, the danger and horror of the trench became unreal. I was the reality. I could not be destroyed. I was filled with a great comfort. During those few moments (that probably did not last much longer than I smiled) I was raised above destruction. . . . It made a great difference to me.' [1]

No song is in the air,
  But one pervading fear;
Death's shadow dims my light, and Death
  Himself is lurking near.

O, break this darksome spell,
  This murky sadness strange;
Let me the terrors of the night
  For cheerful day exchange.

Freshen the air with wind,
  Comfort my heart with song;
Let thoughts be lilies pure, and life
  A river bright and strong.

I give myself to prayer;
  Lord, give Thyself to me,
And in the time of my distress,
  O, haste and succour me. [2]

[1] p. 108.
[2] T. T. Lynch.

The closing scenes of Sir David Brewster's life, in 1869, afford one of the most radiant examples on record of the illuminated, covered way which leads to eternal life. The famous man of science had reached the age of eighty-eight. A delightful conversation is recorded between him and Mr. Herdman, which gives an incomparable sense of security and triumph; but the following note of the last words seems to flood the grave with mellow light: 'He was always peculiarly reverential and guarded in his way of speaking of Deity, habitually using the words "God," "the Lord Jesus Christ," "our Saviour"; but on his deathbed the sense of the nearness and the love of the Lord Jesus, at once his God, his Saviour, and his righteousness, overcame the habits of reserve of a lifetime, and he only spoke of Jesus as a personal, living, waiting Friend. Once, when a sense of difficulty seemed to cross his spirit, he said, "Jesus will take me safe through" with restored confidence. Another time the seldom-spoken words came to my lips and I said, "You will see Charlie," but, gathering himself up after a pause, he answered, as if in gentle rebuke, "I shall see Jesus who created all things, Jesus who made the worlds; I shall see Him as He is." And he repeated, with that pathetic return to his native Scotch which was not uncommon with him when greatly interested, "I shall see Jesus, and that will be grand," with an ineffably happy, cheerful look.' [1]

How know I that it looms lovely that land I
  have never seen,
With morning-glories and heartsease and unexampled green,
With neither heat nor cold in the balm-redolent air?
  Some of this, not all, I know; but this is so;
    Christ is there.

How know I that blessedness befalls who dwell
  in Paradise,
The outwearied hearts refreshing, rekindling the worn-out eyes,
All souls singing, seeing, rejoicing everywhere?
  Nay, much more than this I know; for this is so;
    Christ is there. [2]

[1] R. F. Horton, *Great Issues*, 408f.
[2] Christina Rossetti.

Our Lord's Human Life.

Heb. ii. 16.—'Verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham'.

1. It is a very difficult thing for anybody who believes the Gospel records to believe that Jesus was a man. That has been one of the supreme difficulties of the Church of Christ at all times, and it is a great difficulty to many Christians to-day. 'Oh,' you say, 'I thought the difficulty was just the opposite—to believe that He was anything else than a man.' Please realize the qualification we make. What we say is that for anybody who accepts the records, who takes the Gospels as they are written and accepts them candidly—as people must have done in the first century from which they came—will find it very difficult to believe that Jesus was a real man. The Unitarian believes that He was a man and nothing more, but then the Unitarian does not accept the records. That is the whole point. The people who say Jesus could not be anything more than a man will tell you that the story of the Virgin Birth is untrue. They will tell you that He did not rise from the dead. They will deny the miracles they cannot understand. They used to deny them all, but they are beginning to understand some of them now, so they deny only those they cannot classify scientifically at present. They say the Gospels are the result of legend and rumour and exaggeration; but all this simply emphasizes the statement that it is very difficult for anybody who takes the attitude of Christians living in the first century—which, of course, is the attitude of the men who wrote the Gospels—to believe that Jesus was a real man.

There is a very interesting illustration of this in modern criticism. You know how, in the last century particularly, German theologians argued with great force that Jesus was a very charming human personality, and eliminated in truly Teutonic fashion anything in the New Testament that contradicted their theories, so that there came to be a general view in that country, and in other countries as well, that Jesus really was a very charming human being, and that all the things that seemed to make Him more were the result of the myth-making tendencies of human nature. But here is the curious thing—a new school of critics arose in Germany in the beginning of this century, and their argument about Jesus was that He did not exist at all! The reason they gave for His not existing was this: They said, if you take the Gospel records and read them, you cannot possibly believe what the previous critics have said, that this was a mere man. Either He was a God or He was nothing. They said it was of course absurd to think that a God walked on the earth, therefore He is nothing!

2. These natural disbeliefs had to be met in the first century. St. John met them in his Epistle. They are being met here. This second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the great passage about the humanity of Jesus, just as the greatest passage on His Divinity in Scripture is the first chapter of the same Epistle. Not of the nature of angels did He take hold, but of the seed of Abraham. You cannot explain Him by calling Him an angel, the second chapter asserts. He was a man. He was lower than the angels in scale of being; He called men His brethren; He was made like His brethren; He tasted death as every human being tastes death, and because He was like His brethren, He was fit to be a merciful High Priest in things pertaining to God, making propitiation for the sins of the people. 'For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.' The whole point of the chapter is to bring out the real humanity of Jesus.

(1) Jesus wrought miracles not because He was God, but, as the evangelist tells us, by the Holy Spirit, and He says plainly, 'greater things than these shall ye do.' Jesus was raised from the dead, not by His inherent Divinity—we are never told it was by His inherent Divinity—we are told about the mighty working of the power that God wrought when He raised Him. He was a human being. His whole life was the human consciousness, and His humanity was of a type that is not outside the reach of human beings.

(2) He was not marred and spoilt and lowered by sin. Sin is not the true expression of human nature. No, sin is the expression of ruined, marred, spoiled human nature. When Jesus Christ took upon Him the nature of man He took upon Him the nature of man that was unsullied and unspoilt and unruined. He is not the

average man, but the real Man, and He is none the less human for not being average.

¶ I remember hearing a great preacher once preach an eloquent sermon on this subject. He was speaking of Jesus being the Friend of publicans and sinners, and this great preacher said, 'People talk about Jesus and call Him the friend of sinners, implying that if He went with people like that He was like them, but that was a cruel libel on Jesus; yet we have to face the fact that if you and I went into this bad company people would say "Birds of a feather flock together," and we must acknowledge there would be some truth in it.' He went on to assert that the difference was that Jesus was God and we were men. That assertion is absolutely wrong, and totally absurd. It simply misrepresents the meaning of Jesus and of men. It was not because Jesus was God and we are men that Jesus could consort with the worst people of the time; it was not because He was superhuman, but because He was human, and the reason you and I cannot come into contact with bad people is that we are not human enough. We have not enough of the good qualities of our own nature; we have not realized the possibilities of what it is to be a man or a woman. In the true and deep sense it is because we are such marred, spoilt creatures. If we were men enough we could go into bad company and improve it. It was because Jesus was the supreme Man that He could have that woman at His feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and bless her and comfort her when she came to Him; it was because He was a real, true, magnificent man that He could do that; and if we cannot do that sort of thing, it is because we are poor, mean, little men. If you are human as Christ was human, in its extreme expression all things are possible.[1]

(3) He is the great Elder Brother of the human race. That is the meaning of this wonderful Epistle. That is the meaning of these great sayings about the priesthood of Christ coming out of the humanity of Christ: the high priest is not representative of God; He is the representative of the people. The priest is the man who represents the Church and the people behind him. He is simply the instrument of the people pleading the cause of the people before God. It is the prophet who is the representative of God. When you come to the Old Testament and read about the prophet, the man who speaks the word of Jehovah, He stands there as the Voice of God and thunders out God's words to men, but the priest is the representative of man, not of God. He comes to God as the representative of the people, and the whole value of this wonderful Epistle, emphasizing, as it does, the priestly mission of Jesus in heaven, is founded on the fact that this great High Priest, our representative, is a human being, who has suffered our sorrows and been tempted as we are tempted. His human nature was a perfect one where ours is imperfect. It resisted the pressure of all sorts of external things and ours can be made strong and good enough to resist the same pressure. If we are poor little children in the warfare, lame and blind and weak as we are, and incapable of fighting and conquering, only let us remember He is our great Elder Brother, and what comfort and help is there!

In telling the story of his conversion from Judaism to Christianity, Adolph Saphir says: 'One day I was looking at some books, and the title of one arrested my eye. It was *Die Menschwerdung Gottes*—God becoming man. The thought went through my mind like a flash of lightning; it thrilled my soul with a most joyous solemnity. 'Oh,' I said, 'this would be the most beautiful thing, if God were to become man and visit us!' Not many years after I heard about Jesus, and read the Gospels. I felt here the same presence, the same loving, condescending, redeeming, and sanctifying God that appeared unto the Fathers. I felt that here was Jehovah; that all darkness had disappeared, and that the grand but inconceivable glory here shone upon us in the perfect, peaceful, and holy countenance of the man Christ Jesus.'[1]

A Fellow-Sufferer.

Heb. ii. 17.—'Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.'

'If I believe,' says James Hinton in his *Law-Breaker,* 'that Christ is Divine, that is of no moment. We all wish to know what *man* he

[1] J. E. Rattenbury.

[1] *Memoir of Adolph Saphir*, 235.

was.' Well, here the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us what man He was. He was like us in all things.

In all things, he says. But his special thought is of Christ's sufferings and ours. The sufferings of Christ are regarded not as worthy of God, but as that which *behoved* Christ. 'It behoved' is stronger than 'it became.' The one phrase points to the conformity of the thing in question with God's character and nature; the other declares that the thing in question has in it a moral necessity or obligation; and that Christ's assimilation to His fellows, especially in all the ills that flesh is heir to, was laid upon Him as a necessity, in view of His purpose of redemption and the helping of His fellows.

So then, we have here, in the text and context, three thoughts. First, the completeness of Christ's assimilation to us, especially in regard to suffering; second, Christ's sufferings necessary for the fulfilment of Christ's design; and, lastly, and more especially, Christ's sufferings indispensable for His priestly office.

1. The completeness of Christ's assimilation to us, especially in His sufferings. Observe the emphasis of that expression: 'It behoved him to be made in all things like unto his brethren,' and mark that the 'all things' concerning which our Lord's likeness to mankind is predicated are not the ordinary properties of human nature, but emphatically and specifically man's sorrows. That is to say, the 'all things' of which our Lord became partaker like us, His brethren, are here the whole mass—in all its variety of pressure and diversity of nauseousness and bitterness—of human sorrow which has ever made men's hearts bleed and their eyes weep. Christ, in His single manhood, says the writer, gathered unto himself every form of pain, of misery, of weariness, of burden, which can weigh upon and wear out a human spirit; and no single ingredient that ever made any cup distasteful was left out in that dreadful draught which He emptied to the dregs, ere He passed the chalice to our lips, saying 'Drink ye all of it.'

2. The all-comprehensive sorrow was a necessity imposed upon Him by the purpose which He had in view. The context gives us that in distinct language. Adopting the improved and accurate rendering of the Revised Version of the previous verse, we read, 'Verily not of angels doth he take hold, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham; wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren.' Now the word rendered here 'taketh hold' is the same word which is employed in the narrative of a very striking incident in the Gospels, where the Apostle Peter was ready to sink in the water, and Jesus Christ stretched forth His hand and caught him. That story may serve us as an illustration of the meaning of the writer here. We are all, the whole race of us, exposed to the pelting of the pitiless storm, and ready to sink beneath the waters, but Jesus Christ stretches forth His strong, gentle hand, and lays hold of our tremulous and feeble fingers, and keeps us up above the surges, which else would overwhelm us. Now, says our text, no man can help another unless he stand by the side of, and on the level of, that other. He taketh hold, not of angels, but of the seed of Abraham; and, therefore, He must have a hand like theirs, a hand that can grasp theirs, and which theirs can grasp. Unless the Master had Himself been standing on the heaving surges, and had Himself been subjected to the beating of the storm, He could not have revived and held up the sinking disciple.

3. Lastly, the main purpose of our Lord's sorrows was 'that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.' That defines more closely what He has to do, if He is to help us, and what He does do when He takes hold of the seed of Abraham.

(1) Let us learn what is the true nature of Christ's help. It is the help of a priest who comes to offer a sacrifice which takes away the burden and the guilt of sin from the world. It is not merely the help of a wise Teacher. Men do not want only teaching; their need goes far deeper than that. Christ's help is not only the help of One who declares to His fellows what God is; men's needs go deeper than that. Christ's help is not merely the help of One who sets forth in sweet attractive colours the beauty of holiness and the charm of purity; men's needs go deeper

than that. Not only do we need to know what God is, we need to have our relation to God altered. We need not only to be told what we ought to do, we need that the past shall be cancelled, and the fatal bias and tendency towards evil within ourselves shall be taken away. Christ is not the Helper whose help goes down to the depths and the roots of men's necessity unless He is Priest as well as Prophet and King. He comes to *do* something as well as to *say* something; comes to alter our relations to God, as well as to declare God's heart to us. In a word, we must say even to Christ, 'Vain is Thy help, and impotent is Thy grasp, unless Thou dost bring by Thy sufferings reconciliation for the sins of the people.'

(2) Notice again how here we have Christ's priestly office extended over His whole life of suffering. The popular representations of the gospel, and the superficial grasp of it which many good people have, are accustomed to draw a broad line of demarcation between Christ's life and Christ's death, and to concentrate the whole of the sacrificial and expiatory efficacy of His work in His death only. This text goes in the other direction. It says that all that long-drawn sorrow which ran through the whole life of Jesus Christ, whilst it culminated in His death, was His sacrifice for the sins of the world. For all sorrow, according to Scriptural teaching, is the fruit of sin; and the sinless Christ, who bore the sorrows which He had not earned, in bearing them bore them away. So though the shell of them and the outward appearance of them may be left, the inward reality and the bitterness of them are gone. It is exactly in reference to the ills of life as it is in reference to the other penalty of sin which consists in death. The outward fact continues, the inward nature is altered. For he that can say, 'Christ my Lord suffered for me,' finds that sorrows become solemn joys; and all things work together for good. The Cross is the climax of His sacrifice, but His whole life is sacrifice and expiation, because His whole life is the life of a sinless 'man of sorrows acquainted with grief.'

'In all things like unto his brethren.' One of the finest sayings ever uttered on the correspondence between the sacrifice of Christ and our sacrifice was uttered by Bishop Phillips Brooks in his Easter Day address in the Church of the Holy Trinity, two days after the assassination of Lincoln:

'I confess that there is one thing which surprised me yesterday when I read in some of our papers that natural allusion which occurred to all men—the correspondence between the day of the death of our martyred President and the day on which our Lord was crucified on our behalf; and I saw that the papers, almost with a tone of apology, spoke as if it were a lack of reverence to associate the two, as if there were some degradation to the dignity of Christ's nature when we took the day of His death and called it a fit day for one to lay down his life for a noble cause. I feel that if there were any day in all the year fit for martyrdom; if there were any day which one who was to be a martyr for the cause he loved might choose above all others, it would be that Friday which, with all the solemnity and sadness which hang about it to those who love their Lord and Master, the whole Christian world has risen up in its gratitude and called Good Friday. . . . For remember what Christ is. Christ was not merely a God who stood above us; the very meaning of Christ's coming into this world is that He was a divinely human being in whom every high quality of man was shown forth in its perfection, so that all goodness thenceforth was to be but the copy of the life of Jesus Christ, the perfect man. If there has been any high heroism in the world, any triumph over evil and iniquity, it has been only a faint repetition of that great work which the perfect man did when He triumphed once for all over sin, in behalf of His redeemed world. If there has been any man setting himself earnestly against iniquity as he found it at his especial time and place, it has been only a rebound from that courage with which Christ set Himself against the wickedness that was in the world at His time. And if so be that another Pontius Pilate, as weak as he, is made the agent of an iniquity as deep as that which brought the suffering Saviour to His death, and comes up and strikes at another man pure and good and true to some high object, shall we not say that the day is fit? Do we not know that God has done all things, even the least things that concern Him, well? And then when we pass from Good Friday into Easter Day, shall we say that there is no association when we see

that same Christ, martyred for the sins of man, laying down His life meekly and humbly for a great and noble cause, after patiently suffering for it during His three years, rising gloriously from the grave and shedding thenceforth an influence which His mere personal presence would not have attained? And may we not derive example and inspiration from this new martyrdom and look forward to the resurrection that is promised out of it? Thus take, my dear friends, everything out of the parable of those old times, and without a fear of irreverence (feeling that it is the most reverent thing that we can do) apply it to this trial in the midst of which we live, and make it a lesson which shall be the solemnizing strength of all our lives, that henceforth we may be worthy of having lived in the time, and seen the life and death of Abraham Lincoln.'[1]

His Succour.

Heb. ii. 18.—'In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.'

THERE is one experience which no man ever escaped or can ever escape; that is, the experience of temptation. This life necessarily tests every man who passes through it, and on this hinge of temptation our character turns to good or to evil, and by it our destiny is determined. Without temptation no sin would be committed; and without temptation no holiness could be attained. The human wrecks that seem beyond all capacity of repair and refitting, and the victorious athletes of righteousness whom their fellow-men adore, are alike the products of temptation. For it is impossible to see how, without temptation and the training involved in it, men can attain purity and strength of character. All moral worth lies in the will; God cannot confer holiness upon you by a simple act: you must choose it. It is not *your* holiness until you choose it. It is not yours, indeed, until your choice has become a habit, until by a thousand repetitions of choice you have become habitually righteous. And these repeated choices of good, these ever-renewed righteous acts, will be productive of habitual personal achieved holiness in you, just in proportion to their difficulty—that is, to the amount of resolution or will that is needed to perform them; in other words, in proportion to the stress of temptation in the face of which they are done. Temptation is our opportunity of growth. It is by conflict and exercise, by self-control and discipline, by successfully meeting the tests of daily life that we grow, if we grow at all. In Milton's great language: 'I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.' Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world; we bring impurity much rather; that which purifies us is *trial,* and trial is by what is contrary.

How, then, can we secure that in our case the result of temptation shall be victory and not defeat? It is the object of the Epistle to the Hebrews to convince us that Christ came into the world for the purpose of furnishing us with the required aid.

1. Think of His counsel. What wise directions He gives us in His Word as to the way in which we should walk! In particular, what strong motives He supplies to us for avoiding or else overcoming temptation! How He shows us the sinfulness of sin by Himself bearing it with such sorrow and at last dying for it! How He offers to us the greatest happiness, the greatest rest and comfort of soul, even now, on the simple condition of coming to Him; coming to Him to be forgiven, and coming to Him to be kept safe! How He seeks, as it were, to preoccupy us with Himself, to cover us with the shadow of His wing, so that, when the tempter comes for us, he may not find us, but only Him of whom he is afraid, by whom he has been conquered, from whose face he always flees away! What inducements are these to a poor tempted soul to take refuge in Him; to 'flee for refuge,' as it is said, 'to the hope set before us'! (Heb. vi. 18). If we do this, and if we keep within the refuge, we shall have a sure safeguard.

2. But counsel alone, advice alone, even inducements, alone, may fail of their object. Therefore Christ is the strength of the tempted in that He has given us His own example. He was Himself tempted, in all points and in each point, like us;

[1] A. V. G. Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, p. 179f.

in body, through appetite; in mind, through ambition; in soul, through presumption; and in every particular He met the temptation with its appropriate thought and word of discomfiture. He used that 'sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,' turning its edge, with the most exact discernment, against the particular form of attack. Thus He was not only made accessible to temptation by being in every respect very man, but also foiled each temptation by means equally serviceable for every human being who has the will to use them. We all feel the force of example. For evil is all but omnipotent. Where is he who does not readily follow the evil example of those around him? But has it not some power with us too for good? If a man can say not only, I advise you to do this, but also, I have done this myself; I have found this or that serviceable to me, and, if you try the same means, you will reach the same end; we all feel that there is a force in the words beyond that of mere advice, a force which makes itself felt, as well as a force which convinces and constrains.

3. Again, Christ is the strength of the tempted through His Providence for them that trust in Him. 'All power is given unto me,' He says, 'in heaven and in earth'; in the spiritual as well as in the temporal affairs of His creatures, in the arranging of their circumstances as well as in the influencing of their minds. In the exercise of this power, we are expressly told that He 'will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able'; that is, above the strength which He imparts to meet the temptation, 'but will with the temptation also make a way to escape,' that we may be able to bear it. What should we be without this assurance? Who could manage the affairs of his own life even for one day? What mistakes, what follies, what dangers, what confusion, what discomfort, what desolation of heart, would be the result! But Christ holds in His own hand all the threads which make up the web of life; and He takes care so to weave them for those who trust Him that all shall be well; no one shall be overpowered, no one shall be overwhelmed, with disproportionate or resistless temptations, unless he goes in quest of them for himself, and breaks loose from Him who has him in His charge.

4. And Christ is the strength of the tempted, once more, in this sense: that He ministers to them His Spirit. If we ask, what we should be without His Providence, well may we ask, what would any of us be without the Holy Spirit? Sudden suggestions of evil come into our minds we know not whence, but suggestions and impulses of good come into our hearts we know not whence, thoughts of the wonderful forbearance of God towards us, of the marvellous love of Christ, and of the long patience of the Holy Spirit in striving with our evil and in endeavouring to call us to a better mind; and, along with these, such a sense of our own sinfulness and ingratitude and unprofitableness as seems to constrain us henceforth to live not unto ourselves, but unto Him who so loved and has so borne with us? Do not these things illustrate to us the reality of a Holy Spirit? Do not these things encourage us to believe that He is very near us, that He is within call, that He is desirous of our good? And do they not teach us to commit our ways to His special guidance day by day, that He may supply us with the needful strength in every foreseen and in every unexpected access of temptation?

5. But the text speaks most of all of the sympathy of Christ. It speaks of that sort of sympathy which alone is worthy of the name, the community of feeling which results from having borne the same. That sympathy was made possible for Him only by His becoming man, man in every part of man's nature, man in bodily wants and appetites, man in the capacity of being solicited to evil, man in the necessity of choosing between right and wrong, between self-gratification and obedience. It is this sympathy, acquired in great part in His longest and sorest temptation, but for the exercise of which the whole of His earthly life was one continued preparation—it is this which, more than any one thing, makes Christ the help and strength of tempted man. And it is the knowledge that in the heavenly places there is One who has 'himself suffered being tempted' that often leads us when we would else have despaired to rise yet once more and renew the conflict. This, more than anything else, touches that chord of grateful love which responds to the love which loved first.

¶ A friend of mine once told me of an experi-

ence he had as a pastor. He was calling on a grief-stricken mother, whose wayward daughter was brought back to the old home dead. The mother's heart was not only broken, but the terrific sorrow had crushed it, and the woman seemed to be as one in a dream. It was a sorrow too deep for tears, it was a wound for which there was apparently no balm of healing. Friends and pastor had come to express their sympathy. Their kind words were greatly appreciated. Their tears of sympathy did not fall unobserved. From that woman, however, there came no sigh, and no tear dimmed her eye. There was no convulsion of grief, she sat beside her sinful daughter's dead body like a statue. While my friend was in the room endeavouring to comfort her, a lady, modest and refined in appearance and bearing, entered the door and was immediately recognized by the grief-stricken mother. She at once drew up a chair beside her, and affectionately placed an arm around her waist. She did not say a word, but she put her face close to the face of the woman whose daughter lay dead, and wept. Soon the entire bearing of the mother had noticeably changed. Gracious tears came and she found almost immediate relief. The secret of it was that this other woman had passed through an identical sorrow, and when she entered the room she did not have to speak in order to express her sympathy, because she had passed through the same sad experience. She knew, and therefore could sympathize in a way which was impossible to others.[1]

'Able to succour' in the hour
When earthly succours fail,
When doubts and dark temptations lower
And shocks of sin assail.

'Able to succour' when the heart
Feels nought but fear and sin;
To bid its enemies depart
And whisper peace within.

O Saviour, Thou whose mighty grace
Is all the sinner's plea,
In all my need show Thy dear face,
Stoop down and succour me!

[1] B. Little, *The Pacific North-west Pulpit*, 108.

Considering Christ.

Heb. iii. 1.—'Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus' (R.V).

The Christian religion is marked off from other faiths by the place which it assigns to Jesus as the Christ of God. Christianity has truths in common with other religions, but its distinguishing quality is the function of Jesus, who has not only revealed the purpose of God finally, but realized it in Himself, and made it possible for men to attain their Divine destiny. What Jesus thought of God determines our faith as nothing else can ever do, and what Jesus has done underlies the Christian effort and aspiration. This may sound obvious, but it is never irrelevant to the thought and practice of Christianity to lay stress upon His person as the basis and security of our hope, any more than when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews summoned his readers, as 'partakers of a heavenly calling,' to 'consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus.' As Christians, we have our confession of faith. But to possess a confession or creed does not necessarily imply that we understand its significance or appreciate adequately its bearings.

Speaking of the country gentlemen under Charles the Second, and their love for the English Church, Macaulay remarks that 'their love of the Church was not, indeed, the effect of study or meditation. Few among them could have given any reason, drawn from Scripture or ecclesiastical history, for adhering to her doctrines, her ritual, or her polity; nor were they, as a class, by any means strict observers of that code of morality which is common to all Christian sects. But the experience of many ages proves that men may be ready to fight to the death, and to persecute without pity, for a religion whose creed they do not understand, and whose precepts they habitually disobey.' *Wherefore consider . . . Jesus.* Unless He is assigned His true place by those who draw up a creed, and unless those who accept that creed realize that it involves a personal consideration of their Lord in His absolute significance for their own lives, the gates are opened for an inrush of aberrations in theology and in practice.

1. That being so, note how much practical

direction lies in that single emphatic word 'consider.' There is surely implied, to begin with, that such occupation must be the result of *conscious effort.* No man will keep Christ before his mind without having to make a sensible effort to turn away from the whole rabble of distracting thoughts that lie around him. In this same Epistle to the Hebrews, the writer lays it down as a condition of all persevering continuance in the race set before us that we should be 'looking unto Jesus'; and he employs there a word which might be rendered, perhaps, 'looking away' to Him. That conveys the same idea of rigid shutting out of other things in order that one supreme light may fill the eye and gladden the soul. If you do not carefully drop black curtains round the little chamber, and exclude all side lights, as well as all other objects from the field of vision, there will be no clear impression of the beloved face made upon the sensitive plate. It must be in the darkness that the image is transferred to the heart.

Why should Christian people expect to be able to gaze upon Him whom they have not seen, without practising that concentration and limitation which is indispensable to far lower occupations of mind? It is needed here more than anywhere else, for we have here to do with One whom no sense reveals, and whom outward things and our own sluggish earthly-mindedness are ever conspiring to thrust from our hold. No man makes progress in any branch of human thought or science without this first condition—the habit of pinning himself down wholly to the subject in hand, and rigidly restraining all wandering thoughts. You must bring your instrument to a point before it will penetrate, to an edge that it may cut—and only firm concentration of oneself on the matter before one will do that. And if that be true of regions of thought, where men willingly resort and from which no reluctance of heart draws them back, how much more true it must be of that region to which our heavy souls are averse to rise, and whose pure keen air it is hard for our lungs to breathe? Why, you cannot even make money until, as you say, 'you give your minds to business.' A man sitting at a desk cannot even add up a column of figures correctly, if he is thinking about a hundred other things. And do you think that the Divine glories of Christ are to flow into a man's soul on condition of less concentration and attention? If on the wild stock of our sinful nature a better life has been budded, we have to take care that the energy of our souls does not waste itself in vagrant shoots that bear only scentless wild flowers; and that we prune close and unsparingly our wandering thoughts, our earthly desires, else we shall bear no fragrant blossoms.

¶ Professor Gwatkin of Cambridge, in his Gifford Lectures on *The Knowledge of God,* has a wise word on this: 'The savage has little knowledge, and therefore little power; the skilled chemist or engineer has much knowledge, and therefore much power over Nature. But it is the schoolboy's mistake to suppose that knowledge is purely intellectual, as if the best intellect secured the best knowledge as a matter of course. As he grows wiser he comes to see first that knowledge is chiefly gained by force of will to stick to work; then that force of will is chiefly given by the desire to know. A man who is earnest enough will do a good deal with an inferior intellect, while the cleverest will be stupid if he has no interest in the matter.' [1]

2. But our gaze on Jesus must be the look of *eager interest;* it must be intense as well as fixed. People think that there is nothing to interest them in the gospel. There *is* nothing—and that for many reasons, and among the rest for this: that they do not come to it with awakened eagerness, with interested earnest gaze. And so, because they are careless, it is weary; because they have no hunger, it is tasteless; because they neither expect nor wish to receive anything, they go as empty as they came. To one man, looking out on the world almost as a beast might look, nothing appears wonderful, nothing great; to another, 'every common sight' bears 'the glory and the freshness of a dream,' and seems 'apparelled in celestial light.' To one man looking up with lack-lustre stolid gaze, the stars are but so many shining points, laid flat on a flat arch. To another, they are spheres immeasurable and multitudinous, set in violet depths which imagination cannot fly across, nor thought fathom. And as the earth and the heavens vary according to the eye that looks upon them, so does Christ vary. 'Is it nothing

[1] H. M. Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God,* i. 90.

to you, all ye that pass by?' The careless glance sees nought even in that unparalleled sorrow while some who gaze are bowed in grief, and some are smitten with penitence, and angels are filled with wonder. Christ and His words and works, His life and death, seem to some familiar and commonplace; but, thank God! others, looking on the very same facts, see in them the very mightiest and most blessed things ever done in the world's history; and listening to the very same truths find His lightest word weighty with inexhaustible meaning; and gazing on the very same person in whom some see no beauty that they should desire Him, behold Him as fairer than the sons of men, and the dimmest gleam from His face as bright beyond the radiance of the noonday sun.

On the road to Damascus the same objective phenomenon was probably presented to the senses of Saul and of his companions. But they saw only light, while he beheld a form; they heard only a sound, he heard a voice with a meaning which smote upon his conscience, and bowed his will. We stand together in the secret place of thunder, we stand together before the fontal source of light. Some of us hear but an inarticulate rumbling above the clouds, while others hear the very speech of God. Some of us see but a formless brightness, where others behold Him who is the master-light of all our seeing. If we would hear Christ, we must keep our ear attentive to His voice. If we would behold Him, we must gaze with reverent eagerness and fixed concentration, *setting* our thoughts on things above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. To superficial investigation no treasures are disclosed; we must dig deep if we would find the vein where the gold lies. 'If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up the voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.'

¶ In a letter to Charles Hargrove, who had left the Church of Rome, Kingsley wrote: 'Do not think that your struggles are past. Those of a true seeker for light can only end with the grave—if even then. Only—in due time you shall reap, if you faint not.' [1]

But here is a finer word from the biography of Catherine Booth, the 'Mother' of the Salvation Army: 'We must seek *till we find,* and this is just the difference between real seekers and hypocrites; the former go on till they find, and will not be satisfied with anything less than God; the latter get tired and find rest in creature-good of one kind or another. Better go "hungering and thirsting after righteousness" all our days, than to take up with the devil's draughts or eat his husks. But our Lord is not a hard master, and when He sees that we seek *Him,* not *His gifts,* but *Himself* with all our hearts, then we find Him.' [1]

3. Another requisite of this occupation of mind with Christ and His work may be suggested as included in the word. Our consideration must be resolute and eager; it must also be *steady or continuous.* A hurried glance is as profitless as a careless one. You do not see much on first going into a dark room out of the light; nor do you see much on first going into the light out of the dark. When a man steps for a hasty moment out of the bright sunny market-place, with all its gay colouring, into the cool, dark cathedral, he sees but dimly the still figures above the altar, and the subdued splendour of stained glass and sculptured shrines. And if he rushes back to the outside glare before his eyes become accustomed to the obscurity, he will bear away but a vague impression of confused richness, and have nothing definite to remember. No man can see the beauty of a country as he hurries through it in a train. It is only when we sit still and gaze till all the landscape sinks into our souls, and we are steeped in it, that its fairness is revealed to us.

But how little of this patient prolonged concentration of interested thought on our Lord do even the best and devoutest of us employ! And as for the ordinary Christian life of this day—what a sad contrast does it present to such an ideal! It was Newton who, when asked as to his method of attacking a complicated problem, had only the simple answer to give, 'I keep it before me.' Yes, that is the way to master any subject of thought. The steady gaze will, by slow degrees, see order where the random glance saw only chaos; and the mind long familiar with

[1] L. P. Jacks, *From Authority to Freedom*, p. 252.

[1] F. De L. Booth-Tucker, *The Life of Catherine Booth*, ii. 151.

a truth will have an ease and mastery in wielding it, an instinctive perception of its roots and its consequences, its relations to others, which will seem miraculous to one who has only looked upon it by snatches.

And we shall never see the glory of that light which dwells between the Cherubim if our visits to the shrine are brief and interrupted, and the bulk of our time is spent outside the tabernacle amidst the glaring sand and the blazing sunshine. The Psalmist desired to dwell in the house of the Lord *all the days of his life,* that he might behold the beauty of the Lord; for he knew that only such continuousness of abode would fit his eyes to see the light, and attune his ears to hear the voice of answer to his inquiring in the temple. No short swallow-flights of soul will ever carry us to the serene height where He dwells. It is the eagle with steady unflagging flap of his broad pinion, and open-eyed gaze upwards, that rises 'close to the sun, in lonely lands,' and leaves all the race of short-winged and weak-sighted twitterers far below. Let us *fix* our eyes on Him, our Lord. Surely there is enough there to draw and satisfy the most prolonged eager gaze. He is our Example, our Redeemer, our Prophet. In Him we see all of God that man can apprehend, and all of man. In Him we behold our wisdom, our strength, our righteousness. We may gaze on Him with the confident look of faith, with the else hopeless look of those in whose veins is poisoned death, with the submission of obedience, with the rapture of love.

¶ The delights of religious meditation were to Dr. John Paton infinitely sweet—as his son, the High Master of Manchester Grammar School, tells us in one of the best biographies of recent years. He loved to bring Christ near to him, and to live, even as St. John would have done, with the assurance that his dearest Friend and Brother was never absent from him. The religious theme which engrossed our conversation more than any other was the Brotherhood of Immanuel. To know Him as possessing the power and wisdom of God, yet as being our Elder Brother, was the joy of his soul. To grow up into His likeness was his single desire. And to be with Him, as now he is, in His Father's Home, was his abiding hope.[1]

[1] *John Brown Paton*, 28.

Moses and Christ

Heb. iii. 3.—'This man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses.'

With the history of Moses, and particularly the early history, we are all familiar. We remember that in the days of our childhood there was scarcely any story that interested us so much as that of the little ark that was placed in the water among the rushes. We were exceedingly anxious that its precious freight might be preserved, and we remember the gladness with which we learned that it had been discovered by the daughter of the king; that she had set her maids to fetch it, and that having seen the child it contained she gave the command: 'Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.' And when in addition we learned that that command was given to the child's own mother our gladness knew no bounds. As we advanced in years and in the knowledge of this wonderful character our interest in him deepened, and to-day we are ready to unite with one who has said that he was the most august character of antiquity. We do not wonder that the Jews admired him so greatly, and gave him such an exalted place. And yet we are prepared to accept the declaration of the text—the declaration concerning Christ Jesus our Lord—and repeat the words, 'This man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses.'

1. For one who makes sacrifice and endures suffering in the interest of others is counted worthy of glory. This, we think, will be readily accepted. Abundant illustration might be found throughout the world to-day. We look out over the military world and consider the strife that has gone on between the nations. Many who are here remember the events in detail; and to-day as we go up and down the land, halting in one city and another, we see conspicuous monuments erected in honour of the soldiers of our country; those who stood on the field of battle, and who there died, and to whose memory a grateful nation has erected these monuments. The nation has declared that because they made sacrifices and because they endured suffering in the interests of others they are worthy of glory; and to-day as

we pass one of the soldiers and see him scarred because of the conflict, we lift our hats, we speak a respectful word, we give him honour. And so it has been in all the nations; so it will be. That noble advance by Leonidas and his band of brave followers at Thermopylae has been sung from that day to this, and will be sung down through the ages to come; and the records of the world would readily add to them thousands of similar illustrations.

Take, for example, John Howard, the great English philanthropist, the man who became so deeply impressed that two classes of people were maltreated—the sick and the imprisoned. He had not at hand the proof, he could not readily establish the facts; and so in all forms of disguise he visited the prisons and hospitals, not only in England, but in all Europe, that he might discover the actual conditions prevailing in these places and make revelation of them to a nation in comparative ignorance concerning them. The revelations startled the nation and ultimately led to the abolition of the wrongs. This man crossed the continent, and there entered prisons and hospitals on various pretexts and in various disguises; found proofs that were irresistible, that brought relief to the prisoners and to the sick. We find him on shipboard, exposing himself to the most malignant diseases, gathering information and imparting it to a people that had the power to give relief and work reformation. At last it was discovered that he had spent a fortune, that he had wasted his health and laid down his life in this sacrifice. But to-day the name of John Howard is honoured by all people in Christian lands. We give him all honour because he so strongly illustrates the principle that one who makes sacrifices for others is worthy of honour.

(1) Apply this principle to the two characters that are before us. One is Moses. Recognised as a member of the royal household, a prince in Egypt, roaming at will through the palaces, occupying a high place, he is in a condition such as the world generally would like to find itself. Yet from that place he looks out and looks down upon his own people. He sees them in their suffering, he appreciates their hardships, their toils; considers his own circumstances, then concludes that he must cast in his lot with them. He must go down and give them a helping hand. So he 'chose to suffer affliction' with his own people, making a sacrifice that others, perhaps, might not have been willing to make, but doing it in order that his people might be blessed. Forsaking his princely home in Egypt, he flew to their assistance, taking upon himself a tremendous burden that he might accomplish their deliverance. And who can tell the sufferings that Moses endured while seeking to serve his people? Is it any wonder that the Hebrew gives him such high place?

(2) But look at the other; consider the sacrifice made by Him. He was 'one with the Father,' ruling the armies of heaven, with the angels waiting to do His bidding and fly at His command to the uttermost parts of the universe. He was not simply a prince in Egypt; He was 'God over all,' wearing the crown of the Eternal King; and yet, laying that crown aside and substituting the garb of humanity, He entered a world of darkness, sorrow, and sin, in order that He might save the world. He did it for others; He made the sacrifice, and then entered upon that life of suffering, the like of which has never been seen; the like of which will never be seen again. We cannot describe it. We cannot comprehend it. But we do get some idea of it; an idea that draws us out toward Him who endured it, and helps us to give to Him the highest and sweetest praise which it is in our power to sound. We look toward Him to-day. See Him weeping, hungering, thirsting, weary, lonely, sad; see Him buffeted, bound, smitten, spat upon, bruised, pierced, bleeding, dying! His disciples gone, and His Father's face withdrawn, He is alone in His agony. We listen to His cry: 'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' We say to ourselves, can such suffering be endured by another? And then we try to take in the fact that it was done for others; all this sacrifice, all this suffering for us. Ah, you honour the philanthropist, you acknowledge your debt to the soldier; but what are you doing, what are you disposed to do, for this One who sacrificed and suffered so much more? You will do all in your power when you once come to take in the great truth that it was all done for you. That truth you have not even yet grasped. You think a great deal about the world, its interests, and the Church at large, and try to benefit them all; but turn your thoughts

just for a single minute to the One who made this sacrifice, and say 'It was for me.'

For me these pangs He suffered,
For me this death was borne;
My sins gave sharpness to the nail,
And pointed every thorn.

2. Another principle is this: one who delivers his fellows from bondage is counted worthy of glory. The principle is accepted in all Christian lands; everywhere it is conceded to be correct. Have you not a strong illustration of this? Do you not give glory to those who have exemplified this truth?

Take Wilberforce, to whom England is indebted for freedom more than to any other person. Take Alexander II. of Russia, whose manifesto gave 20,000,000 of serfs their freedom, an act which is the brightest jewel in Russia's crown, and for this one thing we will give to him praise, honour, and glory—he made free men of the serfs. Take Lincoln, whose proclamation of liberty throughout all the land made all men free and independent forever, and caused his name to shine in letters of light throughout the remotest corners of the earth. Now why is it that we honour these and others like them? Not because the impress of royalty was stamped upon them; not because they waged bloody battles and achieved gory victories; but because they broke the shackles from their fellow-men and said to the oppressed, 'Go free.'

(1) Now here is Moses with his people, and being with them he discovers more clearly than he could discover in the past their actual condition. He finds at last that their burdens are intolerable, and that they are about to sink beneath them; they cannot carry them any longer, any further. Their faith, their strength, their body are exhausted. Then it is that this man, having opened his heart to this condition, this truth, goes in to Egypt's king, and in the name of the great Jehovah says, 'Let my people go.' And at last we discover this great leader marching forth into freedom, and securing for himself and his people a glory that can never die. We accord him all praise and honour because he delivered his fellows from bondage.

(2) But as we turn from him again to look at the Other, we discover not simply the Hebrew race; we discover the human race in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. We read concerning it, and it is all the time spoken of as a captive. The word that cannot fail says that 'it is led captive by the devil at his will,' and tells us there is no eye to pity and no arm to save. It is in bondage; a bondage that cannot be changed. When we think of this condition of the race we are reminded of a verse in one of our hymns:

Plunged in a gulf of dark despair
We wretched sinners lay;
Without one cheering beam of hope,
Or spark of glimmering day.

Do you know what despair is? You know something about discouragement and something about disappointment, but you do not know what despair is, when the last ray of hope is gone. There has always been for you that hope which has been said to be a bright and beautiful bird that comes to us in our darkest hour. But here was despair; hope was gone; there was not a spark, not a ray, not a gleam. And then:

With pitying eyes the Prince of Peace
Beheld our helpless grief;
He saw; and oh, amazing love!
He flew to our relief.

It was a common experience of those who ministered to our troops on active service that, while many a tired soldier was uplifted and encouraged by the sight of the Crucifix still hanging or standing in some shell-torn village, the true meaning of the Sacred Sign was never realized, till, by the light perhaps of a few candles in a tumble-down barn, there rose from the lips of men who had long forgotten them, the old words of the children's hymn:

Where the dear Lord was crucified
Who died to save us all.
He died that we might be forgiven.

So, while each makes the Cross his own, and finds in it and cherishes that which helps him most—for its riches are inexhaustible—let this truth be welcomed by all alike, that He who 'hung and suffered there' was the Deliverer from sin and the Saviour of the world. This He

Himself proclaimed as His work. These are the names by which He is known and summoned by thousands of struggling souls. The act of the Crucifixion is explained by its intention. In the purpose of the Cross lies its power.

The Universal Builder.

Heb. iii. 4.—'He that built all things is God.'

'For some six years now,' says Octavia Hill, one of the greatest 'builders' of our time, 'I have thought that, if ever I could afford it, I should like to put up along the whole length of the four houses which face the playground on the east side, some words, which have been very present to me many a time, when my plans for improving the place for the tenants were either very unsuccessful for the moment, or very promising or very triumphant, or very bright, but far away in the future.

'The words are these: "Every house is builded by some man; but He that built all things is God." They have been present to me when I have been at work in putting to rights visible, tangible things there; they have been no less present to me, when I have been trying to build up anything good in the people. They have reproached any presumption in me; but they have revealed to me the sure ground for the very brightest hope that I have ever cherished for the worst of them; for it is indeed but a very limited sense in which we build anything; we only work as His ministers; but all that is built, or shall be built and established, He doeth it Himself.

'How much of all this meaning the passers by may see one does not know, nor very much care. The words would assuredly be a blessing to some people when they come suddenly upon them, in a city full of places that almost make one think that God did not build them—has forgotten them—and does not mean to rebuild them in the years to come, when we listen to His voice more.

'Now will you help me to place the words there? I am not likely ever to be able to afford to do it myself; but I was talking one day lately to a friend about my six years' wish to do it; and he suggested that many people might like to help. There are fifty-six letters; if each letter is a foot square, the inscription will occupy the full length of the four houses; each letter will cost nearly 8/-. If any of you will give a letter, you may like to feel that you have helped to write a sentence that will speak when you are far away, and after you are dead.

'I want to make the sentence very lovely in colour, that the mere brightness of it may be a joy to every one that sees it. It will be done in tiles, so that every shower of rain may keep them clean and bright. I want them to be done in blues, purples, and greens, and very bright; for, though the loveliest effect comes from a subdued glow with sparks of brilliant colour gleaming out, our inscription, costly as it will be and though it will run the length of four houses, will be a little space compared with the dingy spaces of wall in the court, and but a spot compared to the still dingier spaces of all London; so we must treat it as the spark, and let it glow with bright colours.'

1. 'He that built all things is God.' But God is not the only builder. The sparrows that sit on the house-tops are already beginning to gather the materials for the family nest; and joyfully toiling bees have had the reward of their labour in the protection afforded them by their self-constructed and well-compacted hive. Man, God's child, like his Father, is always building. The instinct is strong in him, and build he must, even if he has to pull down before he can get a start. He rears edifices for business and for worship, palatial abodes for art and science, and cathedrals for reverence and adoration. Eager to explain all things in heaven and earth, he constructs his systems of philosophy; rich in the progeny of fancy, he stores them in poetic mansions of exquisite beauty and enduring charm; and so bent is he on this constructive work, that when all else fails him, he, like Joseph, the son of Israel, builds 'castles in the air.' Still, He who built all the builders, and all the things they build with, is God. He began in the undated past, and He keeps on in sundry ways and with diverse materials from generation to generation. Suns and stars are His palaces, the earth and the moons are His footstools, and the wide universe is His paradise. To-day is built up out of yesterday and all its predecessors, and the vast and prolific morrow will be constructed out of the incomprehensible and mighty to-day. 'The heavens declare his glory';

but human history far excels the heavens in the eloquence with which it proclaims His excellent name. 'Mercy shall be built up for ever; thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.'

2. 'Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.' We are His people, the sheep who feed upon His rich pasture, the children who feast at His table. 'We are his workmanship,' created of old with a body that is a finely built machine, opulent in resources, and apt for our uses; with a mind of surprising capacities—perception and reason, memory and conscience, hope and trust, reverence and love; and above all with a spirit that links us with the Infinite, makes us susceptible of being 'created anew in Christ Jesus,' after the type of His holy life. He built Adam and St. Paul, Moses and St. John, Jacob and St. Peter, Isaiah and Augustine, Ruskin and Octavia Hill, and all the chief building men and women of the ages. And the home is His work, built as the primary institution for choking in the germ the destructive self-seeking of the human race, and for developing that love which forgets self, considers all, and creates an atmosphere of domestic and social ozone that refreshes and exhilarates everybody who breathes it.

3. But God's supreme building work goes far, very far beyond that unit of civilisation, the home, and seeks to construct out of the individuals of which the world is composed one vast moral commonwealth, a spiritual republic, a divine 'house,' in which selfishness shall be killed outright, and God and freedom, righteousness and love shall reign for ever and ever; a 'house' with servants like Moses, sons like Jesus, faithful in all things, and forming an 'elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession'; a free, aggressive, and holy spiritual community; a perfect form of society, into which nothing enters that defiles, or makes a lie, 'a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; a body compacted together of self-suppressing, world-redeeming men, enthusiastically dedicated to the full use of their gifts and possessions for the broadest and highest welfare of others.' This is the Divine ideal, the sum and crown of the long and patient labours of God upon men, the image and pattern of the things towards the realization of which all the pulling down and plucking up of nations, and states, and churches, and all the reconstructing of systems and societies steadfastly and assuredly tend. The tabernacle of God will be with men. God's 'House' is being built.

Holding Fast.

Heb. iii. 6.—'If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.'

THE author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is in this section contrasting Christ with Moses. He is writing to Jews who are proud of their past history and who are hard to convince that anything in that past should need to be superseded. Why should not the law of Moses be necessary now as before? So one great object of the writer is to show that the previous revelation, precious as it is, was at the best not final, but was imperfect; and that Jesus came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it. Moses was indeed faithful as a servant, a true mediator to the people, the agent of the old covenant to the Jews; but he asks them to consider the faithfulness of Christ Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. Greater than Moses, who was indeed a faithful servant within God's house, Jesus is a Son over that house, whose house or household are we who believe. The Christian faith is the final and absolute religion, the new covenant between God and man. Partners in that faith are the true house of God. Then follows the necessary condition of our being members of that household: 'If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.' It is an appeal for steadfastness and faithfulness, the endurance of faith and hope.

This is a constant note of the Epistle to the Hebrews. 'We are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.' Again, the writer asks them to show 'diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.' It is a constant note also of the New Testament, and becomes more urgent as the young Church came to grips with the might of the world. When temptations to apostasy were common, when persecution arose, the keener became the demand for unflinching adherence. It

is natural that stress should be laid on a steadfast testimony. Converts are summoned to hold fast the faith and to endure unto the end. It is not, however, merely a hard and dogged perseverance which stands obstinately against force that is encouraged, but an inward intensity of conviction. a hold of the central things of faith; for it is spoken of as a joyful endurance, and (as here) a glorifying of our hope unto the end.

Notice three places in this Epistle where we are told to 'hold fast.'

1. 'If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.' The Greek word translated 'confidence' means in the root of it 'frank speech,' and, so, 'intimacy.' The argument leading to it has been broadly this: God, having revealed Himself in many ways, has spoken now in a Son who is the impress of Himself, who is what God is in all His moral purposes toward us. This Son came near, became one of us, flesh and blood with us, suffering as we suffer, tempted as we are tempted, going through all the things of this mortal life with us, that we might understand that God is for us, and that we might come into deepest, frankest, completest intimacy with Him.

2. 'We are become partakers with Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end' (iii. 14). 'Confidence' again, and it looks as if it were the same word in the original. But it is not. It is a wholly different word. In its simplest meaning it is that which 'settles at the bottom,' and so that which is 'set under,' and hence it is used as confidence. But, most interesting of all, it is the very word used elsewhere of our Lord Himself and there translated 'substance.' In free but permissible paraphrase 'hold fast to reality in your religion.' It would be a tragic thing if this time were not to mean a clearance of unreality out of our personal religion. And when you insist upon getting down to the basal thing you find that the last reality of personal religion is just an experience of God in Christ. There are devout habits and customs and Church associations and responsibilities, all valuable and indeed inevitable. But they are not the bottom thing. The real thing in which religion is alive and powerful is a personal experience of God's grace in Christ the Redeemer.

3. 'Let us hold fast our confession' (iv. 14). Again the inwardness of a word is worth seeking. It is no mere 'profession.' Behind the Greek word lies the idea of a compact, a treaty. It is the word used for the terms of surrender in warfare. Religion is, in our Christian view of it, a commitment. Two parties are to it: God pledged to us in Christ and we pledged to God in Him. There comes here into view that old and wealthy word in the vocabulary of religion which enshrines one of the most audacious ideas and hopes of the race—the word 'covenant.' 'This is the new covenant,' said Jesus when He was about to sign it with His blood. Hold to your compact! It was good for these people to be reminded that something stood amid the break-up of things—God pledged to them in Christ. It was good also that they should be recalled amid their wavering to a sense of their own honour. 'He cannot deny himself'; shall they? There is a feeling in the heart of almost every man which makes him say, 'It is beneath my dignity to do a mean action.' Poor indeed is the man who does not know what that feeling is. You offer a man a temptation to steal. He turns indignantly upon you, and says, 'Do you take me for a thief?' That is honour. What that instinct has done it is hard to overvalue. It has been the ruling power of whole sections of society, almost of whole periods of history. This sense of honour is powerful with us in our relations with one another; the breach of it is a disgraceful thing. Do we not need to recover and to reinforce the sense of honour in the realm of personal religion? If so be that you are a Christian, somewhere, somewhen there was an acceptance by you of God's word given on the honour of Christ and a committing of your own. You do not go back on a friend! You stand ever to your honour! How is it we go back so lightly on our pledge to God? How can we leave so sacred a thing to the mercy of a mood? Great and true is the hymn of Wesley, 'Fixed on this ground will I remain.' It is an affirmation of the honour of a Christian.

Fixed on this ground will I remain,
Though my heart fail and flesh decay;
This anchor shall my soul sustain,
When earth's foundations melt away.

To-Day.

Heb. iii. 7.—'To-day if ye will hear his voice.'

'This verse,' says the Rev. D. J. Martin of Oban, 'has a special interest for me personally. It brought me to immediate Christian decision. I was at the time feeling my way to the Christian life, and was somewhat perplexed, like most orthodoxly-brought-up Highlanders, about the Holy Spirit's work in Conversion. I had thought that I ought to wait for more sense of sin, and also thought I should wait for the Spirit to give me such. When in this state of mind I was reading, one day, a small booklet in which the seventh verse of this chapter was quoted and urged. "*Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice.*" I saw here, as I thought, sufficiently clear, what was the mind of the Spirit, and what He said and wanted me to do, viz., without delay to yield to Christ. I felt myself closed in to yielding and obedience. This was the mind of the Holy Spirit, and I had no right to wait for any other indication of it. So I at once closed the book, went to my room, and there definitely yielded myself to Christ.'[1]

1. To-day, the Holy Ghost saith, is the season for decision. I shall never be nearer God and peace, Christ and redemption, than I am at this instant—never, perhaps, quite so near. Therefore, by an act of faith, let me give my own self to the Lord. Diabolus has been tyrant of Mansoul these many years; let me go down, without another moment's loitering, and open the gates to Prince Emanuel and His captains. I shall not regret doing so either in this world or in the next.

2. To-day, the Holy Ghost saith, is the season for surrender and consecration. I have gone after strange gods too long; at the most and best, it has been a sadly divided allegiance which I have rendered my Lord. But now is His chosen time for ending this drooping piety and this lukewarm love. I must abjure every doubtful practice. I must forsake every questionable companionship. I must crucify every ensnaring sin. It may cost me much, but the gain will far outweigh the loss.

3. To-day, the Holy Ghost saith, is the season for service. Each fresh morning He calls me to do something, however little it be, for my Master and for the men and women and children over whom He yearns. He appeals to me by the immensity of the debt I owe my Lord Jesus Christ, and by the shortness of the time, and by the largeness of the land that remains to be possessed, and by the sweetness of labour for His dear sake. 'Up and be doing,' the Spirit of God says to me.

There are immeasurable possibilities in a single day.

Rise! for the day is passing,
And you lie dreaming on;
The others have buckled their armour,
And forth to the fight are gone:
A place in the ranks awaits you,
Each man has some part to play;
The Past and the Future are nothing,
In the face of the stern To-day.

Rise from your dreams of the Future—
Of gaining some hard-fought field;
Of storming some airy fortress,
Or bidding some giant yield;
Your Future has deeds of glory,
Of honour (God grant it may!);
But your arm will never be stronger,
Or the need so great as To-day.[1]

The Day's Duty.

Heb. iii. 7.—'To-day if ye will hear his voice.'

Let us try to see how God would have us regard the present; let us endeavour to realize what is the duty, what the conditions, what the privileges of each passing day.

1. First, let us remember always that each day has its own possible *blessings*. A poet has imagined the days of his life passing by him, like solemn virgins, in long and silent procession. He sits in his garden and sees them pass; their faces are veiled, their manner is emotionless. In their hands they bear caskets full of various offerings—some trivial, some of inestimable value. Among those gifts, on the one hand, are stars and priceless diadems, on the other Dead Sea fruits and fading

[1] *Life of Donald John Martin*, 28.

[1] A. Procter, *Legends and Lyrics*, p. 54.

blossoms. Forgetting that time which is lost can never be regained, he lets the silent day speed past him. Hastily, at evening, when they have almost disappeared, he snatches their slightest gifts—some crude apple, or withering rose; and, as they turn away in silence, too late, under the awful shadow of their veils, he sees the look of scorn. Yes! every day has its own boons for us, if we will but rightly use them; and most of all these Sabbath-days, which might be to us as beacon-lights in the waste of waters, a source of illumination amid the darkness, of safety amid the storm. And as that eloquent monitor the sun-dial at Lincoln's Inn warns us—*Pereunt et imputantur*—they pass away and are reckoned to our charge.

2. But, besides its gifts, each day has also its *opportunities*. From sunrise to sunset God is giving us opportunities which might be to us prolific in blessings. '*Ex hoc momento*,' says another sun-dial, '*pendet eternitas*'—'From this moment hangs eternity.' When the Roman Emperor, at a day's close, used to exclaim with a sigh, 'Friends, I have lost a day,' he meant that, on that day, he had missed the opportunity of conferring a kindness on anyone. Well, in that one waste of opportunities—the neglect to confer kindnesses—what havoc do we all make of our days! Our noble rule should be:

> Do all the good you can,
> By all the means you can,
> In all the ways you can,
> In all the places you can,
> At all the times you can,
> To all the people you can,
> As long as ever you can;

whereas myriads seem to adopt the rule, 'Do all the harm you can, by all the spite, conceit, and envy you can, in every way you can, to as many as ever you can.' We are not all quite so fallen and despicable as this, but how many of us, day after day, lose precious chances of doing little nameless unremembered acts of kindness, which would cost us nothing, and yet would tend to make the happy happier, and the sorrowful less sad? We see men and women staggering along under heavy burdens, and we do not even stretch out a finger to help them! The word spoken in due season, how good it is! yet how often is it left unspoken? And how often, by selfishness, temper, egotism, vanity, or by mere carelessness—

> For evil is wrought by want of thought
> As well as by want of heart—

we miss that blessing of doing services which the very angels might envy us, were it only by giving a cup of cold water in Christ's name to one of His little ones! But it is not only by daily neglect of the thousand little kindnesses and courtesies which would sweeten life that we waste our days. We squander them, pervert them, turn them into fruitful elements of curse hereafter. 'Time is money,' says the worldly man of business. Ay, but that is the least thing it is, for time is also in some sense eternity.

> See here is dawning
> Another blue day!
> Say, wilt thou let it
> Slip useless away?
>
> Out of eternity
> This day was born;
> Into eternity
> At night will return.
>
> Behold it aforetime
> No eye ever did;
> So soon it for ever
> From all eyes is hid.
>
> See here is dawning
> Another blue day!
> Think, wilt thou let it
> Slip useless away?

3. Again, every day has its most precious and most fruitful *duties*. Riches may fail, fame may vanish, friends may die, but 'this time world flickers on the dim still mirror of eternity, and man's little life has duties which alone are great.' This alone should suffice to rob life of half its perplexities. Are we unhappy? Then, instead of brooding over our sorrows, let us find in duty the surest of consolations, and 'take up our burden of life again,' not saying even, 'It might have been.' Are we happy? The surest way of deepening our happiness, and making it more secure, is to go on in duty's path. 'Do the next thing.' 'Life is the verb to do.' If we cannot

build on the foundations of the past, then let us rebuild amid its ruins. Nothing is more pernicious than idle day-dreams in the place of strenuous endeavours. In the beautiful Greek idyll the poor old weary fisherman dreams that he has caught a fish of pure gold, and that he has sworn to sell it, and never to dip line in the stormy waves again. On awaking he is troubled as to what he ought to do about the oath taken in his dream. 'Cheer up,' says his old comrade, 'you didn't take the oath, for you see you haven't caught the fish of gold. Dreams are nothing. But if, in sober waking, you will toil and watch, some good thing may perhaps come of your vision. Look out for the real fish, lest you die of hunger and your golden dreams.' Is not the moral of the Greek idyll to be found even in Scripture? When the frightened children of Israel murmured to Moses at the sight of the pursuing Egyptians, the Lord said unto Moses, 'Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.' When, in the forty days after the Resurrection, the disciples were awaiting the promise of Pentecost, Simon Peter said to the Apostles, 'I go a fishing.' 'We also go with thee,' they replied; and though all that night they caught nothing, yet, in the dim grey dawn there stood a figure on the shore, and said, 'Cast the net on the right side of the boat and ye shall find.' They obeyed, and when the great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three, filled the swaying net with their rush and gleam, John said unto Peter, 'It is the Lord.' They had found Him more readily in faithful work than in anxious waiting. And so shall we.

4. If, then, every day has its gifts, which we often reject; every day its opportunities of well-doing, which we often waste; every day its duties, which, at the best, we so imperfectly accomplish; ought we not, most earnestly, to thank God that, also, every day has its *helps*. There is an infinitude of help always at hand. God is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble. He will not leave us nor forsake us. He who gave His own Son for our sins, shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Is not Conscience His voice within us? Has He not given us His Holy Spirit? Has He not provided for us in prayer a golden ladder between earth and heaven, on whose rounds ascend and descend the angels of God? The great bell of Westminster booms forth the hours to the tune:

> Lord, through this hour
> Be Thou my guide;
> So through Thy Power
> No foot shall slide!

Is not that an admirable prayer for us from hour to hour? and how potent—were it uttered from the depth of the heart—might be the daily petition, 'Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin!' Again, He limiteth a certain time, saying, in David, 'To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.' The present only is ours; to-morrow is God's; yesterday is God's.

¶ When I was an undergraduate at Cambridge one of my companions, who afterwards grew up to be one of the foremost leaders of science in this century, wrote in a book of mine these memorable words, 'He that would enjoy life, and act with freedom, must have the work of the day constantly before his eyes. Not yesterday's work, lest he fall into despair; not to-morrow's, lest he become a visionary; not that which ends with the day, which is a worldly work; nor yet that only which remains to eternity, for by it he cannot shape his actions. Happy is the man who can recognize in the work of to-day a connected portion of the work of life, and an embodiment of the work of eternity. The foundations of his confidence are unchangeable, for he has been made a partaker of Infinity. He strenuously works out his daily enterprises, because the present, and the present only, is given him for a possession. Thus ought man to be an impersonation of the Divine progress of Nature, and to show forth the union of the finite with the Infinite, not slighting his temporal existence, remembering that in it only is individual action possible; yet never shutting out from his view that which is eternal, knowing that Time is a mystery which man cannot understand until eternal truth enlighten it.'[1]

The Hardening of the Heart.

Heb. iii. 8.—'Harden not your hearts.'

THERE is an hour when the tide is at the flood. Serious thoughts, pure aspirations, tender feel-

[1] F. W. Farrar, *True Religion*, 137.

ings hold the mind. The vision of God and His love in Christ, and of the fair vesture of a life of simple obedience, rises on the soul. The call of Christ is full of appeal. One decisive act, a clear and confessed self-surrender, and the soul would be renewed unto life, and the whole arena of action would be changed. But the heart hardens, and the will refuses to yield. The venture is not made, and all the voyage of life is bound in shallows and in miseries.

It is this solemn issue which the writer to the Hebrews faces as he addresses these early believers. He selects one of the most imperative messages of the Old Testament, as he found it in a Psalmist's appeal. 'To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.' He recalls the incident in the history of Israel which the Psalmist had condensed into a single charge. That was the revolt of Israel against God's call. God had led them into the way. He had shown them His wonders in Egypt. He had been their pillar of cloud by day, and their pillar of fire by night. He had given them bread from heaven. He had filled their lips with songs of deliverance. High hopes had swelled their breasts, and keen emotions had surged through their hearts. No call of God surely can be too high for this people! But now, as they faced the noble emprise of redeeming the sanctuary-land from the corruption of its heathen dominion, and as they were told the cost of that keen warfare, their hearts hardened and they refused. They missed the tide at its flood. 'They who were bidden were not worthy.' They could not enter into God's rest. They died, and their carcasses were buried in the wilderness. Let us consider how this 'holy delicacy of religious impressions,' as John Angell James finely names it, is so often lost.

1. The first cause set down here is *heedlessness*. 'Your fathers tested me, proved me, and saw my works forty years' (v. 9). The writer is recalling the long course of God's dealing when His mercies were new every morning. As a later poet declared, 'He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.' Yet the people lived on in their dull, unspiritual apathy with a constant relapse into strange deeds of unbelief. The sure penalty of this heedless neglect is that hardening of the heart which issues in the loss of the high faculties of the soul.

This is the most common, though it may not seem the most tragic, of all the causes of hardening of the heart. There are men and women whose childhood has been spent in a home of prayer. They have grown through youth to older years, and all their days have been encompassed by gracious providences. They have been taught the wondrous things of God's grace, and have taken His name daily upon their lips. They have known the hour in which a serious awe fell upon their spirits, and great words became significant, and God's call rang through their souls. But when they faced the demand to confess their faith, to yield up their souls, and to live on a new level of obedience, they fell into a silence. They hesitated and delayed. They did not mean to break with God. They did not dream that they were making a denial of God's claim. They merely trifled with it, quietening their consciences with the promise that to-morrow would find them willing to choose. They continued in this drifting attitude. But hour by hour, and month by month, the hardening of the heart went on, until the once-awakened soul sank into a spiritual torpor.

This truth is set clearly in some of the most dramatic incidents of the Old and the New Testament. Look at Herod Antipas, a man who revered the character of John the Baptist and listened to his message. There was a day when a single decision would have been life from the dead for Herod. But the months passed in heedlessness. The day came when he had so far forgotten his hour of illumination that he shut up John in prison. Then came that decisive act when the drunken braggart made his foolish boast and stained his hands with John's blood. That is the hardening of the heart through heedlessness.

There is in Knaresborough, in Yorkshire, the well-known Dropping Well. The water percolates through the limestone rock, and becomes impregnated with its minute particles. As they drop they encrust and petrify whatever they fall upon. Place under this dropping water any soft and porous thing—a book, a folded handkerchief, a bird's nest—and the action of the water will turn it to stone. It is in this manner that the heart is hardened by heedlessness. Sometimes, all

unaware, the man who has refused God's call is hardened by the constant drip, drip, drip of worldly thoughts, secular associations, polluting reading, and ungodly influences, until his heart is hard as stone. Of such men God says, 'They shall not enter into my rest.'

2. The second cause is *the deceitfulness of sin.* Some hearts are hardened in a long season of careless apathy. Others are hardened by the illusions and the delusions of sin. That truth stands out in this writer's second counsel, 'But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' The spiritual fact emphasized here is that in temptation the seducing thing seldom or never comes to us with its foul and debased features disclosed. If every lust rose up to assail us in its gross and unsightly vileness we would bid it be gone in disgust. Only when a man has lost the power to respond to truth and to beauty, and only when, as those who have told the story of Faust have declared, a man has given himself over without reserve to the forces of evil, can sin tempt us and seduce us without first deceiving us. 'Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.'

In the cathedral of Orvieto, in Italy, there is a fresco by the great Italian painter, Luca Signorelli, representing the appearance and triumphs of Antichrist. 'Antichrist is no dreadful monster, but a most grand and dignified figure, with just a faint suggestion of Him of whom he is the rival; noble in look and form till you look into the face, and then the wickedness discloses itself; and he is surrounded with groups of the same stateliness or beauty, and with a profusion of rich and beautiful things, but with nothing that openly suggests badness—only worldliness and its temptations, till you look to the background, and there, persecutions and bloodshed are going on.' [1]

3. The third cause is *a self-conscious refusal.* If some men's hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, there are some which are hardened by an act of deliberate self-will. The writer to the Hebrews sets them before us when he says, 'For some, when they had heard, did provoke' (v. 16). He is singling out some of the more daring leaders in Israel's rebellion. He is suggesting that they knew the significance of their revolt. He is declaring that some men love darkness rather than light, and choose a path of evil with open eyes, the consequence being the hardening of their heart.

The outstanding example of this wilful and froward sinner is that king Pharaoh in whose history this classic phrase is first found. Pharaoh wilfully hardened his heart in spite of a prophet's warning, the repeated discipline of God, and the appeal of a helpless people. With Pharaoh there stands a large number of recusant wrongdoers. Some may be ranked with Orpah, who could resist love and love's sacrifice, a mother's counsel and a sister's consecration, and go back to the degradation of a Moabite life. Others are in line with the rich young ruler. They stop short in the way. They see with clear eyes the cost of the strait gate. They decline the terms, and they turn their back on Christ with sorrow. These are the wilful who rebel against God until they harden their hearts against both His law and His love.

A romantic writer tells us his tale of the little child playing with companions who were vying with each other as to which had done the most wicked thing. She eclipsed their confessions of petty sins and vain imaginings when she said, 'I lifted my hand and struck God.' That is what this decisive act of wilful, deliberate, and conscious sin always does. It lifts its hand and strikes God, and the blow always falls on His heart.

If He should come to-day and stand beside me,
And I should see Him as He was of yore,
When veiled in flesh in all His stainless beauty
He walked beside the Galilean shore;
If He should speak and beckon me to follow
A lonely path and dreary up life's hill—
I wonder—should I dare to go unflinching,
Caring for naught—save but to do His will?

If I should see Him, scorn'd of men, rejected,
Bending beneath that bitter Cross, anew,
With patient eyes that smile through tears of anguish—
His brow thorn-crown'd, scarr'd hands, pierced through and through—
If He should hold to me the cup of suffering,
Bidding me drink the dregs and trust Him still—

[1] *Life and Letters of Dean Church*, 318f.

I wonder—should I shrink from such a testing,
Or stretch out hands of faith to do His will?
If I should see Him in His risen splendour,
Bearing the palm of perfect victory,
Love's very self enthron'd triumphant, tender,
Gleaming in light of awful purity;
If He should teach me with those radiant fingers,
Sealing me His, His purpose to fulfil—
Should I refuse that claim to my allegiance
Or, strong in faith, go forth to do His will?

Unbelief.

Heb. iii. 12.—'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.'

THE warning given in these solemn words derives its force from the historical fact mentioned in the context and intended to illustrate the relations of the soul to God under the Christian dispensation. Writing to people of Hebrew race, the author is at pains to recall to the minds of his readers a traditional episode with which they are all well acquainted, namely, the failure of the Israelites of old under the leadership of Moses to enter and possess their promised land. The illustration is quite to the point; he could hardly have chosen a better one for his purpose. The story of the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt is the story of a marvellous and thrilling achievement effected by faith, the faith of one man. In the teeth of almost insuperable obstacles Moses planned and carried out the work of freeing the race to which he belonged from a condition of abject and cruel servitude, and welding it into a nation. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that he triumphantly accomplished the first part of this great task but not the second. He succeeded in bringing his motley following of emancipated slaves safely away from Egypt, and led them right up to the borders of Canaan; but there they collapsed; they had not confidence enough in their destiny to enable them to attempt anything further; they were afraid, and turned back rather than face the inhabitants of the land they wanted to possess.

It is a very remarkable thing, this mysterious energizing force that from time to time takes possession of a whole race, recreates it, as it were, and impels it to mighty deeds. Perhaps the most astonishing instance of its operation was the sudden rise of Islam in the very same Arabian deserts six hundred years after Christ. Mahomet, like a later Moses, kindled in the hearts of a few degraded children of the wilderness a religious enthusiasm which swept everything before it, created a new civilization, and changed the face of the world. Perhaps it was not a very lofty faith he gave them, but he gave them a faith, and in so doing made them irresistible. No more amazing thing has ever happened in the history of mankind than the explosive rapidity with which widely-scattered, gross-living, material-minded, half-savage desert tribesmen coalesced under the banner of Mahomet into a tidal wave of religious fury which very nearly overwhelmed Christendom itself. What did it? Nothing but the magic of a great and inspiring common idea, the contagion of an intense belief that became a dynamic in every man's heart, causing him to forget himself and all anxiety for his own temporal well-being—making him utterly fearless, in fact—in his pursuit of a super-personal end. While that lasted nothing seemed impossible to those who were possessed by it; when it died away the reign of Islam was over.

1. How wonderfully right, then, the writer of this Epistle is. There is nothing more fatal to all high achievement than an evil heart of unbelief. Not an evil mind, be it observed, but an evil heart. The heart is the man. Unbelief in the sense here denoted springs from something deeper than intellect; it springs from the affections and the will. And it is not so much a question of what to believe—though that is most important—as of the fact that you do believe, that you believe in the liveableness and the meaningfulness of life, in something bigger than your own self-interest, in the essential spirituality of existence, in the good at the heart of all things. You may not have much in the way of a creed and yet be of a believing heart; and, on the other hand, you may hold a very elaborate creed, or think you hold it, and yet be in the very greatest danger of complete moral overthrow.

Dr. Alexander Whyte says in his essay on Cardinal Newman: 'Newman is always assailing and blaming reason. Now, my reason is all

right. My reason partakes in the universal debility of my whole inner man; but the seat of my evil is not in my reason, but in my heart. If my heart were as sound in its offices and operations as my reason I would be nothing short of a saint. But I have an evil heart of unbelief, that even my reason continually condemns and abhors.' Dr. Whyte knew what he was talking about when he said that. The intellect will never lead you wrong on the greatest questions of life unless the heart does first. You may even be unable to assure yourself intellectually for a time of truths which your heart earnestly longs to believe, and yet not be far from the Kingdom of God. As Tennyson says:

> Perplext in faith, but pure in deeds,
> At last he beat his music out.
> There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds.

You may have to fight hard before you can make up your mind what to believe about the relations of God and man, or about human nature and its destiny; but that is a very different thing from being wrong at heart. Pretty nearly every intelligent, serious-minded man or woman goes through an intellectual crisis of this kind at one time or another; perplexing indeed, far beyond our puny abilities to disentangle, are the problems that beset the mind daily in this mysterious world of ours; but if the heart is sound the intellect can be trusted to find a sufficient foothold sooner or later in regard to the worst of them. But it is quite another matter if the heart is evil and remains so. Expel faith from any heart and you have robbed life of its beauty and savour, you have destroyed everything that gave it lasting worth.

2. How does the evil heart of unbelief reveal itself? It reveals itself in 'departing from the living God.' And what is the living God? It is one's real best, the real object of one's reverence and worship, the God who is alive to you. To turn deliberately and consciously away from that which one knows to be one's best, to withdraw one's self from this Divine attraction, to turn one's back upon this invitation of the Spirit—that is to be an infidel, faithless to the revelation offered to one's own soul, sinning, as Jesus said, the unforgivable sin against the Holy Ghost.

A young man goes to the university, the object of many loving prayers in his devoted home, and he prefers the darkness to the light, the service of the Devil to the service of God. That is infidelity; the evil heart of unbelief. An older man, to whom truth has once been a commanding ideal, loses faith in that ideal, sees the vision splendid fade into the light of common day, and settles into a comfortable cynicism as a passive stay-at-home in a world that needs just such men as he. That again is infidelity. He has departed from the living God. In short, unbelief is not an intellectual but a moral sin; it is the Godless life; it is practical atheism. The opposite of faith is not heresy, but faithlessness. The opposite of infidelity is not orthodoxy, but fidelity.

Take heed lest there be in any of you this evil heart of unbelief. For in such ways as these the will of man may be finally and irrevocably divorced from the law of righteousness. As the very nature of the redeemed becomes light, so the very nature of those who have rejected Christ becomes darkness and sin. While it is possible to separate a man from his sin, God's love clings to the man, while God's anger lies on the sin; but when this becomes impossible and the man and the sin are *one,* then there is nothing left but for the evil to be consumed by the fires of the Divine wrath. The final expression of God's abhorrence of sin will be the moral flame in which those who cannot be separated from their sin will be consumed.[1]

The Deceitfulness of Sin.

Heb. iii. 13.—'Exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.' (R.V).

The writer leaves us in no doubt as to what he includes in the grim word 'sin.' For he has just been warning his readers to take heed lest there be in them 'an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' So, then, he means by sin not only the gross forms of evil against which common morality lifts up its protest, but something far more subtle—viz., drawing one's self away from God, and living apart from Him, neither caring to keep His commandments, nor relying upon His strength. That, and not the

[1] *The Life of R. W. Dale*, 313.

surface deeds that human law, or a godless system of morality, points out as evil—that is this writer's conception of sin. And if that is its definition, then you and I and all of us, however respectable, cleanly moral, and fit to pass the standards both of law and of ordinary ethics we may be, come under the ban.

1. Sin deceives us as to its guilt. There are comparatively few people, and even these at comparatively few moments of their lives, who, with a clear present apprehension that a thing is wrong, say to themselves, 'Right or wrong, I am going to do it.' That is not the way by which sin lays hold of us. It seldom marches up to the fortress that it would capture, with flags flying and drums beating, but it burrows underground, and comes up in the citadel before the garrison knows that it is near. Most of us, when we do go wrong, do so, ignoring altogether the right or wrong of the thing that we are going to do, and sometimes we go so far as to persuade ourselves that there is no reason why we should not do it. Ah, yes, 'the pestilence that walketh in darkness' is the pestilence that slays its tens of thousands. The first lie that sin tells me is, 'Never fear, there is not a bit of harm in it. You may do it quite safely. I will not say it is right, but certainly it is not wrong. Come!'

2. Sin deceives us as to the advantages to be gained by it. The old story helps us. 'Ye shall be as gods,' whispered the serpent, 'knowing good and evil.' And that is the type of what happens to us all. The sin is 'pleasant to the sight, good for food, and a thing to be desired,' and the consequences are god-like illumination; and so Eve takes the apple; and that is what we do, for we are drawn to our evil actions by the deceit that they will be a benefit and a help, in some form or other, to us.

But nothing won by sin is worth the price that is paid for it, and that for two or three very plain reasons.

(1) There never was an apple plucked from a tree, in defiance of God's commandment, however rosy-red and streaked with gold its sunny side might be, that did not leave the tang of ashes in the mouth after it was eaten. All the satisfactions that we draw into our lives or hearts by evil only avail to satisfy a little part of ourselves. A man falls into habits of intemperance; he satisfies one craving of his nature, and only one. He falls into habits of gluttony; he satisfies one, and one only. He becomes impure, and sodden with animal vices; he satisfies a physical desire. He gives himself to making money; he makes it. Does that satisfy him? What is the use of having, like Aladdin's palace, the windows 'set with agates, and all the borders with precious stones,' when there is always one window that the builder cannot decorate? *You* are greater than any one of your longings and capacities and needs; and if you feed one animal in the menagerie you leave all the others yelping and hungry. So 'he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase'; and all the cisterns out of which men would fain drink in a sinful fashion are broken cisterns that cannot slake the immortal thirsts of the soul.

(2) Then, for another reason, Sin's representations about its advantages are lies, because she always paints these bigger and better than they really are. Like some knavish tradesman with flourishing advertisements and a poor stock on the shelves, she tempts us into her house by large promises, and when we get there, the reality is at least fifty per cent. below the representation. Did anything that you ever did, that was wrong, taste quite as sweet as you thought it was going to do before you did it? You know the answer. Is it not strange—should we not call it in any other case insanity—that the stale old tricks that have been found out so often have power to deceive us and to draw us still? A fox will get wary of traps. Old birds are not caught with chaff. Burnt children dread the fire. Yet *you* have been trapped, caught with chaff, burnt with fire, times without number, and still 'the net' is not 'spread in vain in the sight of' such a foolish bird as you. Sin, found out a thousand times, comes to us, and tells the threadbare old lies, and we swallow them down whole.

3. Again, Sin deceives about the issues of our deeds. No man, having clearly before him the whole issues of his wrong-doing, would dare to do it. But when desire is excited in our hearts, and sets them throbbing fast, the blood comes up into our eyes, and we cannot see clearly, and so we

venture upon acts which, if we at the moment distinctly apprehended all that would come of them, not one in a hundred of us would ever venture to do. Sin suppresses the ultimate issues. Often by your wrong-doing you get the external goods that you desire, but you get something else along with them that Sin never said a word about when she was coaxing you into her house. She whispers, 'Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant'; but she does not lift the trap-door in the floor, and show you that 'the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of the grave.' She suppresses facts which it is all-important should stand out clearly before us, when we are tempted to do that which is evil.

(1) Sin suppresses the ultimate consequences. She does not tell the drunkard about shaking hands and knotted liver. She does not tell the impure man that his bones will be full of the sins of his youth, and that he will some time have to lie down to rot and die. She does not tell that position will be settled and reputation blasted by the evils that are being done. She huddles all that quietly out of the way.

(2) Sin suppresses the effect of the evil act on the conscience. Is there anything more solemn or awful than the utter reversal of the attitude of conscience *before* and *after* the commission of an evil deed? The moment before it is silent, or, if it speaks, it is unheard in the hubbub. But the moment after, there comes a revulsion, and, in the midst of the quiet, a solemn voice is heard in the depths of the man's own soul: 'Thou hast sinned against the Lord thy God.' Sin did not say anything about that afterclap of conscience, when she said to you, 'Come along; there is no harm in it,' and appealed to a sophisticated and deadened conscience to endorse the declaration.

(3) Sin suppresses the effects on the character, and the fact that no sin is likely to continue alone. Each sin draws others after it; and the lesser, like small boys put through an unguarded window to open the door for housebreakers, make a way for the greater. That awful shaping influence in character, habit, comes into play. A man says, 'There is no harm in it. It is only this once, I will never do it again'; and he does it, again and again and again. You remember the old story of the beetle that crawled up the wall of the tower with a spider's line attached to it, and to that a thread a little thicker, and to that one a little thicker still, until there was a cable strong enough to bear a man's weight. That is the way in which sin weaves its bonds around us—at first a tiny thread that we fancy we can break, and at last an iron chain that eats into the flesh. 'He shall be holden with the cords of his sins.'

Rest.

Heb. iv. 1.—'Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.'

THE writer of this Epistle strikes here the keynote of Jewish hope. He writes to the Hebrews, and is in perfect harmony with Hebrew thought and feeling in representing 'rest' as the supreme blessing of God to His people. The word 'peace' was the Hebrew salutation. It was the most striking contrast which the Hebrew language could convey to the conception of restlessness and turmoil. Hence, when one Hebrew accosted another, the greatest blessing that could be conveyed in a salutation was, 'Peace be to thee,' or 'Peace be to this house.'

The Greek had another conception of blessedness; his thoughts ran in the direction of beauty and elegance. The people who excelled in art, and in their sense of symmetry, especially in the human form, as the many exquisite statues which we see to-day in our museums abundantly show, conceived beauty as the essential of blessedness, and harmony as the condition of 'joy.' This was the leading thought of the Greek. Life to him was happy to the extent that it was elegant or harmonious. Beauty to such was the supreme joy and blessing of life, and so the highest desire of the Greek to his fellow as he wished him 'joy' was that life should be symmetrical and harmonious, and thus joyous.

The Roman, on the other hand, was of a robuster type. He was the soldier: the man who believed in health and strength. He thought that life was worth very little unless a man enjoyed the full vigour of health. Thus the noblest conception of bliss he had was possession of strength. 'Salve!'—'Be strong,' 'be healthy'—was his salutation. We see it on many a doormat to-day; as we cross it we recognize that the wish of the host into whose house we enter is that we may be in possession of health. Thus the Hebrew,

the Greek, and the Roman had three different conceptions of happiness.

We are not surprised that the Jews' conception of blessedness should have been 'rest.' The early experience of the Jews pointed to this. They were under bondage in Egypt. Their yearning under the yoke of their taskmasters was for rest. But even when delivered from Egypt, the first trial which they had to endure as a discipline and a means of preparation for the Canaan that awaited them, was a constant restlessness. They were tossed hither and thither, had no home and no resting-place for forty years. They were made to realize that that was not their rest. Their life was pre-eminently one of conflict, and they learnt during those forty years that one penalty of being out of God's Canaan was to live a life that had in it little or no pause. Thus it seems to have been ingrained in them by God's providence that restlessness was typical of sin, and rest of holiness. Their further experience in Canaan, also, might be referred to, and, indeed, their whole national experience might be dwelt upon, as illustrative of the same truth. To the measure that they served God, peace was theirs. We meet now and again with the significant phrase, 'The land had rest.' That is a striking Hebraism. The enemy no longer annoyed, and the people were in possession of the national peace and restfulness for which they yearned.

Now, all this followed upon the record of God's creative power at the beginning, which culminated in a Divine rest and satisfaction. What wonder, then, that rest became to the Jews the synonym of the greatest blessing which God could confer upon His people. Such rest as God Himself had entered into at the close of His accomplished work was the greatest reward possible to them. Now, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews grasps this; and having dwelt in the third chapter upon the history of the Jewish people under Moses, and having shown how often they erred, and thus forfeited the rest which God had promised them, he commences the fourth chapter in the words of our text—'Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.'

Thus there were promises of rest, one after another. Each promise was unfulfilled for lack of faith in those to whom it was made. But God's promises are never made in vain. Therefore there is a rest yet to be enjoyed—to be enjoyed by the people of God—it is the rest which Christ came to give. Let us follow the author as he describes the different rests.

1. There is *the rest upon which God Himself entered, the rest of completed work and fulfilled design.* 'God rested the seventh day from all his work.' That assurance was at the basis of the Hebrew Sabbath. Just as God had rested the seventh day, His people were requested to rest the seventh day from all their work. This was the rest of comparative inactivity, but it had a greater meaning than that. It was not a mere inaction. It was not that man did not toil, and *therefore* rested; but it was the rest of a completed task, of an accomplished design. All of us who are workers surely know the difference between simply giving up our work, and saying, 'I will do no more,' and thus resting in the sense of not doing anything, and the rest which comes to us when we know that a day's work is done, and that a design has been fulfilled or a task accomplished. In the latter case the rest is the rest of comparative satisfaction. It is the pause that comes between one chapter and another in life's book. Thus the Sabbath came to the Jew as a rest from a week's completed task, as God's rest came to Him at the close of his creative work. Now that was the first conception of rest which the Jewish religion supplied.

But there was also another rest over and above this. God, in harmony with His universal rule, gave the Jews one blessing in order to prepare them for another and a greater. This is the Divine order of 'grace for grace.' The Sabbath rest which God gave His people, while it was a fulfilment of a hope and a satisfaction of a yearning in the heart of the Hebrew, also pointed to another rest. In the wilderness the Jews had the Sabbath, and in that sense had rest; but yet they had not the rest for which they hoped while they thus wandered.

2. There was, next, *the rest in the peaceful possession of the promised land.* That rest was denied thousands. They 'died in hope.' Others entered Canaan and had that rest. But even the rest of a nation in free possession of its promised

earthly inheritance, although in itself a token of Divine favour and blessing, and also a rest on a larger scale than even the Sabbath, was not the final rest for which they longed. Thus God's fulfilment widened as ages moved—one fulfilment pointed to yet another, and that to succeeding ones. There was no finality about the rest of Canaan any more than of the Sabbath. Indeed, there is nothing final on this earth, pre-eminently in the religious sphere. Every hope, every grace, every Christian virtue in the godly man's life, is prophetic of something nobler and higher yet to come.

The writer of this Epistle to the Hebrews, therefore, reminds us that, notwithstanding the possession of Canaan in the time of David, God still spoke of rest as if His promise had not yet been exhausted. 'Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time,' etc. Observe, this was long after they had possession of the land, and when the land had rest, as we read, in the time of David. Hence the writer proceeds—'For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.' Joshua was the one who under God gave them the possession of Canaan; and that was a fuller realization of their hopes than anything that had preceded. But yet God's promise of rest was not thus finally fulfilled; and David, though he had the privilege of reigning over a united people at a time when 'the land had rest'—and if national prosperity and peace could fully represent the rest which God had promised to His people, that surely would have been a fulfilment—exclaimed, 'To-day, after so long a time,' etc. In other words, David says, 'All you have received but encourages the hope for something greater and still diviner.'

3. Thus David would lead the nation a step higher—*to the sanctuary to find rest in meditation of God's law, and in waiting upon Him.* He brought them to a higher spiritual level. It was not enough for them to rejoice in the Sabbath as an institution, it was not even enough for them to rejoice in the possession of the Promised Land as the typical rest. All these were but outward visible signs of an inward spiritual grace. David would seek the Lord in His house, and thus find rest and peace in His sanctuary. When he thought of the prosperity of the wicked, he was perplexed and restless, until he went '*to the house of the Lord.*' Then he found rest.

And so there was a spiritual element brought in by David which the nation had missed hitherto. He practically said to them, 'The Sabbath is a Divine institution, typical of rest, and expressive of it, therefore it is your duty to observe the Sabbath. The land of Canaan, too, is a pledge and promise of rest; but all this is not a final rest in itself; there is a higher rest, a rest of communion with God. "Harden not your hearts."'

4. Now the writer of this Epistle proceeds a step further, and affirms that even spiritual communion *does not find its full meaning and realization except in Jesus Christ.* But here, again, there was danger of forfeiting this rest through unbelief, as others had forfeited in ancient time the rest which was a pledge and promise of this—'Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.'

There is a good illustration in one of Hudson Taylor's letters quoted in his biography. It is the story of his own experience at the most momentous crisis in his life. 'All the time I felt assured that there was in Christ all I needed, but the practical question was how to get it *out.* He was rich, truly, but I was poor; He strong, but I weak. I knew full well that there was in the root, the stem, abundant fatness; but how to get it into my puny little branch was the question. As gradually the light was dawning on me, I saw that faith was the only pre-requisite, was the hand to lay hold on His fulness and make it my own. *But I had not this faith.* I strove for it, but it would not come; tried to exercise it, but in vain. Seeing more and more the wondrous supply of grace laid up in Jesus, the fulness of our precious Saviour—my helplessness and guilt seemed to increase. Sins committed appeared but as trifles compared with the sin of unbelief which was their cause, which could not or would not take God at His word, but rather made Him a liar! Unbelief was, I felt, *the* damning sin of the world—yet I indulged in it. I prayed for faith, but it came not. What was I to do?

'When my agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy was used to remove the scales from my eyes, and the Spirit

of God revealed the truth of *our oneness with Jesus* as I had never known it before. McCarthy, who had been much exercised by the same sense of failure, but saw the light before I did, wrote (I quote from memory):

'"But how to get faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith, but by resting on the Faithful One."

'As I read I saw it all! "If we believe *not*, He abideth faithful." I looked to Jesus and saw (and when I saw, oh, how joy flowed!) that He had said, "I will never leave you." "Ah, *there* is rest!" I thought. "I have striven in vain to rest in Him. I'll strive no more. For has *He* not promised to abide with me—never to leave me, never to fail me?"'[1]

The Faith of the Hearer.

Heb. iv. 2.—'The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.'

THERE is a reference here to a ministry that was Divine in its origin, and was charged throughout with Divine power, yet a ministry that proved a failure. Failure always brings sadness with it: broken hopes and disappointed ambitions are always things which touch us as we witness them, and which sometimes well-nigh crush us when we experience them. Any energy wasted, and especially any life culminating in broken purposes, is tragic in the extreme. In the heart of man there is a feeling that no energy ought to be lost. The more we search into the physical world, and get at the forces which play in it, the more we realize that the law of things is that no force should be wasted, and that every energy should have its proper effect and produce its due results; and when we come from the physical to the mental and the spiritual spheres, failure of result strikes us as a very incongruous thing: it is an anomaly which we desire to have explained to us. 'Why could not we cast him out?' was the question asked by the disciples at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, when, notwithstanding the fact that Christ had given them power to cast out devils, they had, in one instance, failed to do so. They had previously been marvellously successful in that respect, but here was a failure. Why this exception? Why could not the power of their ministry be commensurate with their claims? If they were endued with power, why this lack of result? Everything depended upon the answer to that question. No man has a right to remain satisfied with no results. Every spiritual failure demands an explanation of its existence.

There is especially a pathetic interest, though it is made up of sadness and hope together, in the sight of any good thing which fails of power and of its fullest life, because it is a fragment and does not meet the other part which is needed to complete the whole. A seed that lies upon the rock and finds no ground; an instrument that stands complete in all its mechanism but with no player's hand to call its music out; a man who might do brave and useful things under the summons of a friend's enthusiasm, but goes through life alone; a nature with fine noble qualities that need the complement of other qualities which are lacking, to make a fruitful life; a country rich in certain elements of character, such as energy, hopefulness, self-confidence, but wanting just that profound conscientiousness, that scrupulous integrity, which should be the rudder to these broad and eager sails; a Church devout without thoughtfulness, or liberal without deep convictions—where would the long list of illustrations end? Everywhere the most pathetic sights are those in which possibility and failure meet. Indeed, herein lies the general pathos which belongs to the great human history as a whole, and to each man's single life. Not with the quiet satisfaction with which we look at inanimate nature or at the brutes, not with the sublime delight with which we think of God, can our thoughts rest on man, the meeting-place of such evident power and such no less evident deficiency.

1. The world needs its appropriate response. It is good, but it does good only when it is received in faith. The application of any object to its faculty, the opening of the faculty to its object—that is what makes the richness of all life. In the open faculty the object finds its true mixture, and its higher life begins. You hold a bit of sweet food to the eye and it finds no welcome there. It is 'not mixed with faith.' Only when it touches the tongue it opens its possibilities, and becomes, first, pleasure, and then, nourishment. You play sweet music to the taste,

[1] *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission*, 175.

and the taste cannot hear it. It makes no entrance. It is 'not mixed with faith.' For faith is another word for welcome—the cordial acceptance of any presence into the inmost chambers of our human nature where that particular presence has a right to go.

2. How easy it is to carry this up from the physical structure to much higher things! You bring a true, rich friend, and set him before a sordid man, a man of selfish ambitions, and how powerless he is! He makes no entrance. He is 'not mixed with faith.' You take a great motive, one that has rung like a bugle in the ears of the noblest men that have ever lived, and you make it sound in the ears of a dull boy who has no ambition to be noble, and why is it that it falls dead? Because it is 'not mixed with faith.' It finds in this boy no answering manhood with which it may unite and make a noble man. Truth and a soul that is ready for truth meet like the fuel and the flame. They know each other. It is like the Lord's Parable of the Sower. The good seed finds the ground ready, and out of their quick union comes the plant that by and by crowns itself with the flower. The seed upon the stony ground comes to nothing, because it is 'not mixed with faith.'

3. This principle runs through the Bible. Remember the course of the sacred History which is a perpetual parable of that other no less sacred history which is in the life of every religious man. The story of the Bible is simply the record of God, the great eternal Circumstance, the vast Surrounding that always encompasses the life of man; constantly offering Himself to that life and testing its capacity to receive Him. At the beginning comes the mysterious story of Genesis. The Creator walks with the new Humanity among the trees of the New Garden. But the Humanity, as yet unripened by experience, untrained by suffering, unenlightened by the discovery of its own essential feebleness, self-confident and superficial, cannot take the Divine society into its deepest heart. Adam and Eve—the young and untrained Earth and Life—take God into the society of their happiness, but not into the inmost chambers, the government of their wills and the consolation of their sorrow.

At the other end of the Bible is the New Jerusalem, and there what have we? Man rich in all the fearful and beautiful experience of life; humanity with all its history of grief and comfort, of sin and redemption; humanity mellowed, softened, humbled, deepened by all the experiences of the long, slow day in which the ages of human history have been the creeping hours. And lo! in this beaten and ripened humanity the doors are all wide open. Even into the deepest chambers enters the ever-present God, and finds in each chamber a new faith with which He mixes Himself and becomes the soul's life. 'The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.' Between the two ends of the Bible, there is the story of God's perpetual offer of Himself to the soul of man, and of His entrance into it just so far as He finds faith to welcome Him. Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, the Prophets, John the Baptist, Nicodemus, John the disciple, Paul—each marks some access of the Divine Presence to our human life. And each bears witness how impossible it is even for God to enter into a humanity that has not faith, to enter any humanity farther than that humanity has faith to take His blessed Presence in.

Says Catherine Marsh: 'It is our littleness of faith which makes us unable to realize His response of love to our prayer. I have said His response, but after all, our prayer is but the response to Him. Do you think you would have any faith in His saving power, any faint desire to love Him, if He had not first talked very much to your heart, and taken you into His own gentle, though strong Hand, to train you for Himself? Be very sure that any wish to be taught how to love Him, is your soul's reply to His words, "Seek ye My face." An almost daily prayer of mine is that beautiful Collect, "O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love towards Thee, that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire." It must be His gift—that love, but we can ask for it.'[1]

[1] *The Life and Friendships of Catherine Marsh*, 34.

Rest by Faith.

Heb. iv. 3.—'We which have believed do enter into rest.'

The Revised Version says 'into that rest.' It is the rest which God promised again and again to the Israelites, but into which they never fully entered because of their unbelief. That rest now awaits those who believe, in other words Christians. We who believe, we who are the followers of Christ, do enter into that rest.

1. Now first of all this rest is a present rest. It is ours now. And the first step towards the winning of that rest is the giving up of self-will and the receiving of God's will as our own. It is to make our life at one with God's character, with justice and purity, with truth and love, with mercy and joy. It is the surrender of our own pleasure and the making of God's desire for us the master of our life. That is the first step—a direction of the soul to God. The second has to do with mankind. It is the replacing of all self-love by the love of our fellow-men; a direction of the soul to God through man.

These two ways are in reality one; and there is no other way, if we search the whole world over, in which we may attain rest. Simple as it sounds, it is the very last way many of us seek. We fight against this truth, and it has to be beaten into us by pain. Clear as it seems, it is a secret which is as difficult to discover as the Elixir of Life, but it is so difficult because we do not will to discover it.

One lived long ago on earth who found it out. And He put it in this way: 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' This has a strange sound, for we do not immediately conceive how meekness and lowliness are bound up with work; and without work, in which God finds His rest, there can be none of the peace of harmony and power. But meekness towards God is willingly to take the will of God for our own; and the will of God is this, as Jesus conceived it: 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work'; and the work of God is this—to seek and save the lost, to redeem the world by love, to die for truth and righteousness when we have lived for them. In lowly submission to that law of life, in taking that yoke upon us, is the secret of the rest of the human soul.

I have entered into rest;
I have put my works aside;
In His work I now abide.

I have entered into rest;
All my striving put away—
In His peace I dwell to-day.

I have entered into rest—
Ceased my running to and fro—
His own quietness to know.

I have entered into rest;
He hath bidden me be still—
Taught the secret of His will.

I have entered into rest;
In His death myself I see—
And behold, His life in me![1]

2. But there is a future perfecting of the present rest. The repose of faith which is experienced here, because the causes of unrest are taken away, and a new ally comes into the field, and our wills submit, and our desires are satisfied, is but the germ of that eternal day of rest to which we look forward. The gift spoken of here is a present thing; but that present thing bears in all its lineaments a prophecy of its own completion. And the repose of a Christian heart in the midst of life's work and worry is the best anticipation and picture, because it is the beginning, of the rest of heaven.

Very dear and very beautiful that deep repose will be, none the less dear for all the trouble and the battle which have gone before. It may not be that the greatness of our enjoyment of the rest that remaineth is in proportion to the greatness of our trouble, for that would imply that the rest of Heaven is inactivity. But in proportion as we do our work well, the idea of what rest is grows a higher one; and with the development of the idea of rest, develops also our capacity for enjoying it. For as we go on steadily battling, steadily working, we get ease in doing our fighting and our labour; and with ease of doing comes en-

[1] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 151.

joyment of doing, and sense of mastery; and the ease and the enjoyment and the mastery are things that increase also, till at last, beginning to see that we can put into form all we want to do—at once, without much trouble, without much battle—we foresee clearly that the time may come when we shall have no trouble or no battle about faithful and true work for God; when the moment of temptation will be instantly followed by victory; the moment of duty's call to work by rushing acceptance of it; the moment of acceptance by instant conception of the way to do it; the moment of conception of the way to do work by immediate creation of the form in which the work will best embody itself; the moment of creation of the form by swift, life-giving, beautiful, glorious, joyous work; the moment that one work is completed by the desire of new work, because the unimaginable swiftness of doing has been so delightful and the sense of creation so intense with life, and the joy in both so beautiful and buoyant.

'What,' asked a friend of William Wilberforce, 'is your idea of heaven?' He answered, 'Love.' 'And what,' said the questioner, turning to Robert Hall, always a sufferer, 'is yours?' 'Mine,' he answered, 'is Rest.' Both were right, for 'There,' as Augustine says 'we shall rest and gaze; we shall gaze and love, we shall love and praise.'

A Sabbath-Keeping.

Heb. iv. 9.—'There remaineth therefore a rest (A.V. m. "keeping of a sabbath") to the people of God.'

We lose much of the meaning of this passage by our superficial habit of transferring it to a future state. The ground of the mistake is in the misinterpretation of that word 'remaineth', which is taken to point to the 'rest' after the sorrows of this life are all done with. Of course there *is* such a rest; but if we take the context of the passage, we cannot but recognize this as the truth that is taught here, that Faith, and not Death, is the gate to participation in Christ's rest—that the rest remained over after Moses and Judaism, but came into possession under and by Christ.

For the main scope of the whole passage is the elucidation of one of the points in which the writer asserts the superiority of Christ to Moses, of Christianity to Judaism. That old system, says he, had in it for its very heart a promise of *rest;* but it had only *a promise.* It could not *give* the thing that it held forth. It could not, by the nature of the system. It could not, as is manifest from this fact—that years after they had entered into possession of the land, years after the promise had been first given, the Psalmist represents the entrance into that rest as a privilege not yet realized, but waiting to be grasped by the men of his day whose hearts were softened to hear God's voice. David's words clearly, to the mind of the writer of the Epistle, show that Canaan was not the promised 'rest.' David treats it as being obtained by obedience to God's word; as not possessed by the people, though they had the promised land. He treats it as then, in his own 'day,' still but a promise, and a promise which might not be fulfilled to his people if they hardened their hearts. All this carries the inference that the Mosaic system did not *give* the 'rest' it promised. Hence, says the author of the Hebrews, that 'rest' held forth from the beginning, gleaming before all generations of the Jewish people, but to them only a fair vision, remains unpossessed as yet, but to be possessed. God's word has been pledged. He has said that there shall be a share in His rest for His people. The ancient people did not get it. What then? Is God's promise thereby cancelled? 'They could not enter in because of unbelief.' But the unbelief of man shall not make the faith of God without effect. Therefore, as the eternal promise has been given, and they counted themselves unworthy, the Divine mercy which will find some to enter therein, and will not be baulked of its purposes, turns to the Gentiles; and the 'rest' *remains* for all who believe to partake.

1. The first rest is the rest that comes to those who hear Christ saying, 'Hither to me,' who in faith obey Him as He calls them. 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' This is the rest of faith. In this rest, no matter how broken it be, are received the remission of sins and the gift of eternal life. Those who come to Christ are forgiven, and He pours His own life into the narrow river beds of theirs. Thus it is well with them, even although they fail to appropriate those blessings of the New Covenant that are possible and attainable even in these vexed and mortal

years. However we may love to dwell on the larger privileges of the believing soul, we err gravely if we disparage for a moment the more ordinary workings of the Holy Ghost and the more familiar gifts of the Christian life. The Church on earth cannot be as a whole perpetually in an incandescent glow. There must be the beginnings, and there will be those who do not go beyond them. But the beginnings are also ends, and whosoever has been forgiven and renewed has before him all the blessings that grace brings in eternity. Nay, we may remind ourselves that the feebler members are the more necessary, and that the Church is upheld as a whole by multitudes of trembling, humble believers, many of whom are almost inclined to doubt their own interest in Christ. But He does not disparage or forget that interest. He has bestowed Himself upon them, and will not recall the gift. They by faith have entered into His rest. The rest is His clear, free, unmerited gift. 'I will *give* you rest.'

To Him who hears I whisper all;
And softlier than the dews of heaven
The tears of Christ's compassion fall;
I know I am forgiven.

Wrapped in the peace that follows prayer,
I fold my hands in perfect trust,
Forgetful of the cross I bear,
Through noonday heat and dust.

No more life's mysteries vex my thought;
No cruel doubts disturb my breast;
My heavy-laden spirit sought
And found the promised rest.

2. The second rest is a rest in *service*. It is the rest of those who take Christ's yoke and burden upon them. Not all of the redeemed seek this service as they should. Many of them remain in secret places, and even when they come forward to testify, their testimony is mingled with that of the great congregation. Others are eager to spread the Kingdom and to carry the load of Jesus Christ. Now, though in the end the yoke becomes easy and the burden light, this is by no means true of the beginning. The yoke is at first irksome, hard, and chafing. The burden is very heavy, for it is no less than the burden of Christ's Cross. But those who bravely assume the yoke and burden discover at last that there is a rest which, if not the reward, is at least the sequel of service, a rest whose sweetness brings courage and assurance, and boldness in the day of Judgment, a rest in which we often sow in tears and eat the bread of tears, and nevertheless rejoice inwardly.

What then, asks Charles Kingsley, in one of his letters, is the true rest? Not idleness, but peace of mind. To rest from sin, from sorrow, from fear, from doubt, from care; this is true rest. Above all, to rest from the worst weariness of all—knowing one's duty, and yet not being able to do it. That is true rest; the rest of God, who works for ever, and yet is at rest for ever; as the stars over our heads move for ever, thousands of miles a day, and yet are at perfect rest, because they move orderly, harmoniously, fulfilling the law which God has given them. Perfect rest, in perfect work; that surely is the true rest.[1]

The Bible.

Heb. iv. 12.—'The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.'

If there is anything that living Christians are everywhere agreed upon, it surely is that in Scripture the voice of God is heard with a directness and authority altogether unique; and that the Word of God is found in experience to be, as nothing else is, the seed of eternal life. While, however, this is the case, is it wise to put the question always in the way indicated? When a storm is inevitable, it is well to have not one anchor only, but all the anchors out; and ours is a time when the foundations of our faith in the Word of God should be made as broad as possible. We may both greatly confirm our own faith and strengthen the defence which we make against adversaries if, instead of always treating the Bible as a book apart, we sometimes compare it with other books on their own grounds, and observe in how transcendent a degree it possesses the qualities which confer value and immortality on any literature. It is to three of those qualities that our text directs attention—namely, its quickness, its powerfulness, and its sharpness—'The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharp.'

1. *The Word of God is quick.*—This term is

[1] *Life of Charles Kingsley*, ii. 355.

here employed in the same sense as in the phrase, 'the quick and the dead,' which, as every one knows, means the living and the dead, and in the phrase, 'cutting to the quick,' which means cutting into the living flesh. The statement then is that the Bible is living. What does that signify? Well, this is a term we apply to other books and forms of literature besides the Bible. We all know what a living book is, and we know what a dead book is. There are many books produced which have no life in them. They are stillborn. The words and sentences are there, and perhaps the writer has expended a world of pains, but somehow you cannot read the thing; if you try you fall asleep. But a living book is interesting. It draws you on. It rivets the attention and charms the mind. You speak delightedly and excitedly to others about it, and ask them if they have read it. Now, in this sense the Bible is the most living of all books. How eagerly children listen to it! As they hear for the first time the stories of David and Goliath, or Samson and the lion, or Samuel and the midnight voice, or Jesus born in the stable or crucified on the tree, it seems the very book for them. But old people read it with equal avidity for the hundredth time, and even when all its words are known nearly by heart they do not seem to lose their relish.

Nothing in literature is so fascinating to the human mind as the life of a man. Now, the Bible is full of the biographical element. It is incomparably rich in portraits of men. Genesis, for instance, the opening book of the Bible, may be described as composed of six biographies: those of Adam and Noah, Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. And this element abounds in the books which follow, even when they are not narrative in form. In the Psalms, for instance, what an insight we get into the human heart! Many a psalm embodies the essence of a life—an entire spiritual biography. And in St. Paul's writings how intimate is the knowledge we obtain of the man. Without knowing what he was doing he has painted a perfect portrait of himself. Is this not what makes literature living—when the man puts himself into what he writes? Someone has said that what makes literature immortal is the streak of blood on it. And you can hardly lay your finger on the Bible anywhere without feeling a heart beating beneath your touch.

Give me the Word—the Word!
Leave me, I pray, with the Word and the Spirit alone;
Thus shall the Way and the Truth be made known;
Thus all the depths of my soul with the life shall be stirred.[1]

2. *The Word of God is powerful.*—Literature may be living without being powerful. An illustration of this which all can appreciate is supplied by the daily press. A great deal of the writing in the newspapers is intensely alive. It is bright, sparkling, and interesting—hitting exactly the taste and mood of the public at the moment. But, though it has vitality, it has not powerful vitality. It lives, but it does not live long. It has the bright vitality of the insect which dances in the light for an hour at sunset, but drops and is carried away on the surface of the river. To-day's newspaper may be living, but yesterday's is as dead as the scorched and empty envelope of a sky-rocket. The Bible, on the contrary, is not only living, but also powerful. It has a strong and persistent vitality. How long it has lived! It is at least three thousand years since some of it was penned, and the latest portions of it are almost two thousand years old. But the colours of these glowing pictures are still as fresh as if they had been laid on yesterday. It is an extraordinary evidence of the power of the book that, though written for a small Oriental people thousands of years ago, it is now the chief classic of the greatest Western peoples—of peoples which can boast of names like Shakespeare and Goethe—and wherever it is introduced—India, China, Japan—it at once takes its place at the head of all literatures.

Many of the best books lose their charm in the process of translation. For example, the brightest thing in Latin literature is the work of Horace, and in German literature there is nothing more unique than the poetry of Heine. But none who can read the Odes of Horace and the Songs of Heine only in translation really taste their peculiar flavour, for the bloom is lost in the process of translation. But our Bible is a translated book; and yet its fascination is not lost. This is because, great as is the charm of its form in some parts, its power always lies principally

[1] E. Divall, *A Believer's Songs*, 97.

in its substance. It deals with the grandest subjects that can occupy the human mind, and it appeals to the deepest things in human nature. In the solemn crises of life, when man anxiously asks the great questions of destiny, this is the only book that gives assured and satisfactory answers.

Dr. Dale of Birmingham narrates a remarkable conversation which he had with a Japanese gentleman of high intelligence and culture who had embraced Christianity. He asked him by what arguments he was convinced that Christianity was the true religion. The answer was very different from what he had expected. The thoughtful and learned man had read no books of evidences, but he told how, in his heathen days, he had been a seeker for the truth, and especially how, as he studied the cold system of Confucianism, he longed for the revelation of a personal God. At length a New Testament came into his hands, and as he read it he seemed to be finding at every step all that he had been seeking. Especially when he alighted on the thirteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians—St. Paul's immortal eulogium of love—it so dazzled him with the glory of truth that he felt it must be Divine. And then he got into the Gospel of St. John, and before he had finished it he had no doubt that Christ was the Son of God. This is the natural effect of an open-minded, unprejudiced reading of the Bible. Its tone is so sublime and yet so sober, so majestic and yet so sympathetic, that it carries the conviction along with it that it comes from God, just as light requires no demonstration, but inevitably carries the eye up to the great orb from which it comes.

3. *The Word of God is sharp.*—What does this mean? Well, it means that the Bible is the book of the conscience. Some great books of the world—like Homer's 'Iliad' or Milton's 'Paradise Lost'—are books for the imagination; others—like Newton's 'Principia' or Adam Smith's 'Wealth of Nations'—are books for the intellect; but the Bible is emphatically the book of the conscience. There is no other book which speaks so much about sin and holiness and retribution. In our text this is forcibly expressed by two figures of speech. The Word of God is compared to a sword, and to a spy or detective.

(1) The Word of God is 'sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow'. Just as a sharp sword, by one well-directed blow, can cut through a limb and show what is beneath the skin, and what is beneath the flesh, and even what is within the bone, so the Bible can lay bare the secrets of the inner man, cutting any part of it, be it soul or spirit, through and through. And as a sharp sword, inserted at the joints, could separate limb from limb and dissect the whole body, so can the Word of God dissect the inner man. Have not some of us found it so? We remember when we were laid on the dissecting-table, and this knife of God's Word, sharper than a sword, played over us, laying bare the secrets of the past and revealing depths of corruption which were unsuspected even by ourselves. This is a painful experience. It is sharp as the cutting of a sword. The Word can wound and cause the pierced flesh to glow with burning pain; it can make the blood flow, till we are faint almost unto death.

(2) The other figure of speech brings out even more strongly the sharpness of the Word. It compares it to a spy, or witness, or judge. It is 'a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' Have you not felt when reading the Bible as if it knew all about you—all your history in the past, and even your history yet to come—not only what you have done, but what you are capable of doing? The purposes forming in the womb of the will before they are born into deeds, the reveries of the fancy which are so secret from other observers, the dim motions of the heart—it is a discerner of all these. It is personified, as if it were a living observer. And do you notice how in the next verse this personification is carried further? 'Neither', it goes on to say, 'is there any creature which is not manifest in his sight.' Whose sight? Is it God's sight, or is it the Word's? You can hardly tell, though in the closing sentence it seems distinctly to be God who is meant: 'For all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.'

Why this confusing, so to speak, of the Word and God together? Ah! there lies the deepest secret. When you are reading the Bible, it is as if you were looking at an arras hanging on a wall with figures worked on it, when suddenly, as you trace the outlines, you are aware that not painted, but living, eyeballs are moving behind the eyes and

observing you. As you read the Bible with an awakened mind and a tender conscience, you realize that the words are the words not merely of a book but of a person, that behind its statements there is a living mind, and in every command a lofty will. You are beset and overshadowed by a living and awful presence. In no other book is this the case in the same degree. Other books, indeed, also sometimes deal with the conscience, and some of them do so with great effect. Some of Shakespeare's greatest plays, for example, such as *Macbeth* and *Richard III.*, derive their power from laying bare the secrets of crime and criminal intention. And in certain passages as, for instance, when in King Richard's tent the ghosts of his victims one by one file past and demand vengeance from their murderer, there is in the words a spell of blood-curdling horror. But when it is over and the spell broken, you are not only entirely released, but can even look back and enjoy the sensation. Not so, however, the Bible. It tells its story, indeed, with the same entrancing effect; but at the critical point, instead of releasing you, it lays hold of you with 'Thou art the man', and takes you into the presence of Him with whom you have to do.

'Not long ago,' says Professor Stalker, 'a friend of mine died, and I was asked by his family to write a brief life of him. For this purpose his papers were put into my hands, and it was in many ways a sad and solemn task to go through them. One seemed to oneself sometimes to be rifling the secrets of the dead. He was not a minister, but he had made a very decided profession of religion; and I was now to see how far his profession was real. As I advanced, I came on evidences more and more clear that beneath the surface his religion had deep, healthy roots. But the decisive evidence was his Bible. This also had been put into my hands along with the other documents, and when I opened it it told a tale. Everywhere there were the marks of constant and loving use—favourite verses underlined, brief comments here and there, sometimes a few words of prayer for the blessings which the verses promised. But—most significant of all—the finest books, such as the Psalms and Isaiah in the Old Testament and St. John in the New, were so worn with constant fingering that they were like old bank-notes. Here is a test. If you were to die, and your Bible were to fall into the hands of those who come after you, what tale would it tell?'

The God with Whom we have to do.

Heb. iv. 13.—'All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.'

In these words we have a most impressive and suggestive description of God. He is 'the One with whom we *have to do*'; the one Being, that is, with whom, above all others, we have dealings; with whom we come into the most intimate and unceasing contact. In theory none will dispute that this is true as regards our relations with God. And yet what a contrast here with the ordinary thinking of most men, even of many Christians! How often we think of God as if He were afar off, seated on the throne of the heavens, content—for the present, at least—to watch our doings from a distance; or as if our relation to Him and His to us were only vague and general, and not personal and special; or again as if we had to do with God only in the far past, as in some indirect way our Creator; or as if we were only to have to do with Him in the future; or as if, though we have to do with Him in the present life, yet this were only on rare occasions, in life's great crises, such as compel us in spite of ourselves to say, 'This is the finger of God!'

Such are the ways in which most men think of God; over against which stand the words of the text, which declare that God is 'the One with whom we have to do': words teaching that each and every one of us, not in the past or in the future, or merely now and then, but in the living present, and that continuously, is *having to do* with God. All this is legitimately included in the grammatical sense of the words: God is the One with whom we have to do. What is contained in this thought?'

1. In the first place, God is the One with whom we are constantly having to do, in what we call *Nature*. Science is making this clearer and clearer every year. For there are two things which the modern advance of scientific thought has brought very distinctly before us. The first of these is the fact of the *unity* of all the forces of Nature. Our fathers used to suppose that light and heat and electricity and magnetism were all forces quite

distinct and separate. We have learned that they are so only in appearance; that in reality all the physical forces are one; different manifestations of one force, which, moreover, is incapable of either increase or diminution, absolutely indestructible. The second fact toward which all scientific investigation points is no less remarkable and significant; namely, that force—this one force which is manifested to our sense under all these different forms—is *spiritual*. It is not, and cannot be, material, or of material origin. It is of the very nature of matter that it is dead and inert; the power, therefore, which flashes in the sunshine or warms us with the heat, or strikes us with the lightning, or crashes in the thunder, must have its source and origin in a Being immaterial and spiritual. So far Science can go, but no farther. Standing with dumb awe before the veil which hides from profane vision the unseen Holy, she trembles to utter the dread secret, the inner mystery of Nature. But who, or what, is the Being, the spiritual Being, from whom constantly flows forth this inexhaustible stream of power which continually thrills through the infinite spaces of the universe? Who can that Being be, but God? For, in all this, science is but unconsciously iterating the testimony of Scripture, which constantly represents all the forces of Nature as the manifested power of the sole and only God: as therefore really *one,* just because God is One; as therefore spiritual in their innermost nature, because the one God is a personal Spirit. For it is declared that in the thunder it is *God* that thundereth marvellously with His voice; that it is *God* who causeth His sun to shine and His rain to fall alike on the evil and on the good, and also in the desert places where no man dwelleth; that it is *God* who calleth forth the lightnings, that they may come and say, 'Behold us!' while He rides upon the wings of the wind, and makes the clouds His chariot.

2. Secondly, we have to do with God in *Providence*. By Providence we mean God's overruling care over all events in Nature and all the actions and circumstances of men. Now in His Word it is clearly and repeatedly asserted that He has a purpose which He is evolving from age to age in the history of the human race as a whole, and of every individual in it. 'There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.' The hearts of all men are 'in the hand of the Lord; he turneth them whithersoever he will.' 'A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps.' A sparrow 'shall not fall on the ground without your Father.' 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered.'

Now if we assent to the doctrine that God's Providence is in and over all events, it will give a new importance to every occurrence. The history of the past will then become to us a part of God's revelation of Himself to men, and the incidents of the present will be felt to be the unfolding of that 'one increasing purpose' of His which is running through the ages. They will seem to us to be a part of the unwinding of that roll which shall stretch at last from the beginning to the end of time—from paradise lost to paradise regained—and shall be bright with the manifestation of the wisdom and love of the Most High. Nay, more: if we assent to this doctrine—and there seems to be no alternative between that and atheism—then the events in our own personal history, painful and pleasant alike, are seen to be 'the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us,' and we enter into the assurance of the Apostle when he says, 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.'

3. We have to do with God in the awards of *final judgment*. The judgment is absolutely certain; for 'it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.' It is to be universal; for before the judge shall be 'gathered all nations.' The judge is to be the Omniscient One, who is acquainted with the secret things of each man's heart and life, and the Righteous One, who shall render to every man according to his works. Now when we take all these things into consideration, and remember that we are making now the materials for which these awards are to be given at the last, 'what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?' The day of judgment will make nothing new. It will only reveal the characters which we are making now, and stamp them with the fixity of eternity. Thus we invest the brief space of our lives here

with tremendous importance, for it holds in it the issues of eternity; and it does so because in the whole matter we have to do with God.

This sense of judgment to come is felt the wide world over. Read the latest report of the Bible Society: 'In the Argentine a man who was leading an evil life confessed to a colporteur—"It fills me with fear to read the Bible, so I have hidden mine at the bottom of my trunk." In Hungary last year Colporteur Csordas found many people not only ignorant of the Scriptures, but quite averse to possessing them. "On the Day of Judgment," they said, "we shall be able to tell God that we did not know what His will was; but if we buy the Bible, we cannot use this plea." Here is an extract from the journal of one of our colporteurs in Ceylon: "At a certain village I visited a man who is in the habit of receiving bribes for bearing false witness in the courts. He asked and paid for a copy of Proverbs. The next day, however, he brought it back and said he did not require such a book, because 'it tells quite against me, and reproves too much every one who is in the wrong paths.' He begged me to take the book back and return the money."'

The Fact of the Ascension.

Heb. iv. 14.—'We have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens.'

THE Ascension of Christ is the completion and crown of all that is involved in the Incarnation, and far too little attention has been paid to it. It is treated by many as if it were a legendary embellishment of the finish of the gospel story, whereas it is as much a part of the narrative as the Crucifixion or the Resurrection. Nay, it is as necessary to our faith and for all purposes of true religion as any other portion of the Saviour's history. Apart from it we can understand fully neither Christ nor ourselves. In relation to ourselves, it is the final disclosure of our true destiny; and in relation to Christ, it is the revelation of His majesty as Lord of the universe and Mediator of grace. If His earthly life and death were meant to show us the Father, His heavenly ministry is designed to sustain, uplift, and bring us near to the Father. 'If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain. . . . Ye are yet in your sins.' And equally true it is that, if Christ be not ascended, we have no ground into which to cast the anchor of our souls.

There is very little in the New Testament about the Ascension. St. Matthew says nothing about it at all. St. Mark's Gospel, the original ending of which is probably lost, a later ending being added, has but the scantiest note: 'So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.' The Fourth Gospel, although it refers incidentally to the Ascension, as when Jesus spoke to Mary in the garden, and said, 'I have not yet ascended,' gives no account of the Ascension. It is only when we turn to St. Luke that we find any definite narrative. He gives us two accounts, the first, that in his Gospel, very brief: 'He parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him.' The second account, in the first chapter of Acts, is more complete, setting the scene before us in a succession of vivid phrases and striking incidents. Yet in this account, too, the actual description of the Ascension is confined to the words: 'As they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.'

Before considering the historic value of these statements, it is worth while to pause and ask if this doctrine, however well attested historically, does not impose too great a strain upon our faith. Does it not defy all our knowledge of Nature? Do we not know that space is limitless, that beyond us in every direction there are great abysses extending into infinity, through which light, travelling at unimaginable speed, yet travels for centuries before reaching this earth? And if that be so—and it surely is—does it not approach the blasphemous as well as the ridiculous to say that Jesus, by some curious conquest of the law of gravity, ascended and passed through the heavens to the place where God is? Well, all this is a natural criticism of what people hundreds of years ago believed, but it is not a proper criticism of the simple statement in the New Testament. That statement amounts to this: that after various appearances and disappearances our Risen Lord, having taken solemn farewell of His disciples, vanished from them in such a way that they went rejoicing to their toil and sufferings, assured that

He had returned to His Father. All the fanciful and even grotesque imaginings of the body of Jesus floating away from the earth and landing at last in another heavenly world situate somewhere over our heads, is really foreign to the simple and restrained narratives of the New Testament. Nevertheless, it is right, if we are to affirm that we do believe in the Ascension—it is right for us very earnestly to inquire as to the grounds upon which this belief is based. These grounds are chiefly two.

1. First of all, the Ascension is of course indissolubly connected with the Resurrection. He who does not believe in the Resurrection will not, of course, concern himself for a moment with the Ascension; while, on the other hand, he who believes in the Resurrection must regard something answering to the Ascension as in the natural order of things. If Jesus really did reappear to His disciples after death, His reappearance was for a limited time, and came by-and-by to a termination. He would bid them farewell in an appropriate fashion. And further, He must have done this in some solemn and glorious way, or they would not have been convinced—as they were convinced—of the completeness and finality of His conquest of death and the grave. The Ascension made it quite clear to the disciples that the marvellous event with which they dealt was not a mere revivifying of the body of Jesus, nor a mere haunting of the scene of His sufferings by His restless spirit. It left them quite certain that Jesus had not withdrawn into some obscure corner to die once again, and had not faded away into final nothingness as the myths of Egypt taught men to expect returning spirits to do. They felt that He had triumphed wholly in the end and was now their Lord in heaven. That is the faith that the disciples held as to the Resurrection, and its radiant completeness makes the evidence of the Gospels and Acts many times more convincing than it would be of itself.

2. The other ground of belief is the Epistles. Everywhere Jesus is spoken of in terms of the risen, triumphant, and ruling Lord. St. Peter and St. Paul, the writers of Hebrews and Revelation, St. John and St. Jude, have almost forgotten Jesus according to the flesh. They are so filled with the sense of His risen and ascended splendour that it is always in their minds. And it seems evident this had been quite impossible to men who were the contemporaries and companions of Jesus had not some such astounding evidence as the Resurrection been brought to a fitting close by such a solemn and beautiful disappearance of the Lord as is pictured in the Ascension.

The Spiritual Value of the Ascension.

Heb. iv. 14.—'Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession' (R.V.).

Surely we may hold fast our confession that Jesus the Son of God hath passed through the heavens, and may say, 'I believe in Jesus Christ, He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.' But when we say this, merely witnessing to an historic fact, we have not stated the main part of our belief. The historic occurrence is merely a means to an end; it is the vital spiritual principle in and behind the event, and so in and behind all life, that God desires to reveal to us. If all that we have to say is that, in the year 30, Jesus of Nazareth, having risen from the dead and appeared to His disciples, solemnly and joyously took His departure for heaven, we have said, after all, but very little. What is the revelational content of these historic events? What is it that God declares to us through them?

1. Through the Ascension there is made objective and, as it were, concrete, the doctrine that Christ is, to-day and always, in heaven before God as the representative of man. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it that we have in the ascended Jesus a high priest who, being experienced, expert, in all human trials and temptations, can 'be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.'

The notion of the high priest is rather foreign to us. It was natural and intelligible to the Jews, because the high priest was their national institution. But no high priest plays any part in our life. What we have is rather a Prime Minister. Every one knows what a Prime Minister is. He controls the destinies of the United Kingdom; he is intimately associated with the King; when the King speaks, his words are the words of his Premier. So the whole destiny of our nation depends upon

the sort of Prime Minister we have. If the Prime Minister is an aristocrat, we know that it is exceedingly difficult for him to enter into the feelings and needs of a very large part of the community. If he belongs to the middle-classes, we know that a much larger body of the public will feel that they are likely to be treated reasonably and with understanding by the King's Government. In Australia Labour Premiers are now quite usual. Where there is such a Premier, naturally the labouring classes feel that their interests and needs are now brought home to the Government. They have a Prime Minister who is 'touched with the feeling of their infirmities.' There is nothing that can take the place of experience, and where the Government has personal experience of a wide sort at its command, its enactments are bound to secure a large confidence.

Now the Ascension teaches us (what is indeed an eternal truth) that God has this experience of human conditions. It teaches us that some element or Person in the Godhead, whom we call the Son of God, shares the throne of God, His own personality being enriched by the experience of human limitation, weakness, ignorance, suffering, desolation and death. As the working-man representative brings to Parliament a knowledge of the lot of the labourer, so Jesus takes to heaven the experiences of earth.

2. The next thing we find in the doctrine of the Ascension, is assistance in prayer. This, too, the Epistle to the Hebrews emphasizes. Having this ascended High Priest, we read: 'Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.' What is our experience when we pray? Are our prayers merely 'words, words, words,' or do we regard prayer as a real transaction and God as a real hearer? If prayer is thus a real thing for us, the gloomy thought must often present itself, 'What right have I to expect God to notice me, to attend to me, to answer me? My lips are unclean, my desires are carnal, my heart is insincere, and every day some new guilt falls upon me. How can I be so arrogant and self-proud as to expect attention and consideration at God's hands? Am I not like the purse-proud upstart knocking in vain at the house of culture and simplicity?' When we think like this it is not enough to know that Jesus once taught that God is the Father of all men; we want to be assured that He is our personal and loving Father at this minute and in this act. It is not enough to know that God in general is a forgiving God. What we want to know is that God has taken our sins one by one in His hand and weighed them and hated them, and—destroyed them. Our halting and shame-faced souls need help in coming to God; need to know that in the very bosom of the Eternal there is, in the person of Jesus Christ, our sympathetic, encouraging, and self-sacrificing Saviour. What happened in Palestine is real now. The Lamb of God dying for us is not a phase of God past and obliterated; it is a permanent element in the one God. Jesus Christ has ascended, and is on the right hand of God for evermore.

3. One other great truth is revealed and enforced by the doctrine of the Ascension. This is that Jesus sits upon the throne that controls the destinies of humanity, and, indeed, all creation. The whole thing is full of waste and cruelty, and a seeming disregard of right and beauty. But to the eye of faith it changes. Avalanche and earthquake, revolution and tyranny, war and competition, the blazing mine and the loathsome plague, the callous palace and the filthy slum—all these somehow must no longer inspire gloom and distrust. For Jesus is ascended, and seated at the right hand of God. The Man who has been through the mill, the sympathetic Jesus who hated cruelty, the sinless One who chose the Cross, the sunny-souled Hero who went down into the desolation of Calvary, the Son of God who rose again—He is the General of the army, He is at the head of all the movements of time. So we can trust and not be afraid; so we can look out upon the glittering horrors of life, and shout proudly and cheerfully, holding fast our confession, 'Jesus, the Son of God, hath passed through the heavens, and is seated at the right hand of God.'

Jesus, the Saviour, reigns,
The God of truth and love;
When He had purged our stains,
He took His seat above:
Lift up your heart, life up your voice;
Rejoice; again I say, Rejoice.

In Touch.

Heb. iv. 15.—'Touched with the feeling of our infirmities.'

BEFORE there can be real understanding between one man and another, the one must be in tune, in touch, with the other. That princess was not in touch with the needs of her people who, on being told in time of famine that they had no bread, replied, 'No bread! Ah! poor people, why do they not eat biscuits then?' She had never known herself what hunger was, or the difficulty of satisfying it, and so, though her pity may have been genuine enough, she was not in touch with the real situation. Jesus, our High Priest was in touch with man and He was in touch with God. For so it must be with a true High Priest. If he is not in touch with man he does not know how to bring our case before God, and if he is not in touch with God he does no good if he brings it.

1. Our High Priest is in touch with man. For He is man. It is not merely from His omniscience, from His Divine standpoint, but from the fulness and perfection of His humanity. As Divine, Jesus might know us far better than we do ourselves, and might help us where we are helpless, yet it would not be as one who had actually passed through similar experiences. A veterinary surgeon might understand what was the matter with a suffering animal, and might be able to help it when the poor animal of itself would be helpless, but all that is from a superior position. He has not felt just as the brute feels. To do that fully, he would need to come down to the same level of life, and pass through similar experiences. With all our pity for the lower animals, and with all the help we can give them, still theirs is a world outside ours. It cannot be said that we enter into and comprehend their feelings. They are a mystery to us. We are not in complete touch with them. Christ knows us in all the range of our feelings and needs, because He became man. 'We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities,'

(1) He is *in touch with our needs.*—How true that was in the case of Jesus, even as regards the need for bodily food! That may be the lowest need of man, but it is very necessary. We cannot exist long without it. We cannot live many hours in comfort without the supply of that need. And again and again Christ's consideration for that want is manifest in the Gospels. When the disciples would have sent the multitude away, Jesus made provision for the supply of their bodily need. 'Come and dine,' He said to His disciples on the shore of the lake after their fruitless night of toil. And when He raised the daughter of Jairus, He commanded that something should be given her to eat. The parents, perhaps, might be so overjoyed at the restoration of their child as to forget about that for the moment. But Jesus was in touch with the child's needs, and did not overlook the first requirement.

A friend once told me, that, while living a few years ago in the south of England, she devoted some leisure time to teaching reading to a number of ploughmen, who had grown to manhood without learning to read or write. One of them, as soon as he was able, began reading through the Gospels; and when he had reached the end, his first comment to his teacher on what he had read was, 'Eh, but the Saviour was very kind. He always looked after the victuals.' He himself had known at times what it was to be hungry, and to have difficulty in supplying his wants, and so Christ's sympathy in that respect appealed to him.[1]

(2) Jesus was just as truly *in touch with human joy.* And that is perhaps a greater wonder. The apostolic injunction is to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep; and it is much easier often to carry out the latter portion of that injunction than the first. Everybody with a heart at all must sympathize with suffering, but it is not always so easy to enter into another's joy; and especially if our own lot be one in which sorrow, more than joy, abounds. It needs a big heart to be in touch with the greater joy and prosperity of a fellow-creature. But here Jesus did not fail. His sympathies were far wider than John the Baptist's, and that was so, even though He Himself was pre-eminently the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and was straitened till His great work should be accomplished.

It was His glory to declare the sacredness of all

[1] J. S. Mayer.

natural enjoyments. His first miracle was at a marriage. It was not a marriage only, but a marriage-feast. As plainly as words can describe, here was a banquet of human enjoyment. The very language of the master of the feast about men who had well drunk tells us that there had been, not excess of course, but happiness there and merry-making. Neither can we explain away the lesson by saying that it is no example to us for Christ was there to do good, and that what was safe for Him might be unsafe for us. For if His life is no pattern for us here in this case of accepting an invitation, in what can we be sure it *is* a pattern? Besides, He took His disciples there, and His mother was there; they were not shielded, as He was, by immaculate purity. He was there as a guest at first, as Messiah only afterwards: thereby He declared the sacredness of natural enjoyments.

(3) And he was *in touch with us in our temptations*.—Just because He was so pure and holy, He could not understand what it is to be tempted as we poor fallen creatures so often are. He, who 'nor fell nor failed at all', cannot be in touch there with us who so often fail and fall. Well, curiously enough, it is just that point which the writer emphasizes in our text—'Being tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.' Of course there are many things temptations to us which could never be temptations to Christ. There was nothing of the base within Him for many things which find a mighty hold in us to appeal to. But we make a great mistake if we imagine that temptation's power lies only in the line of what is ignoble and degraded. The mightiest temptations may be those that appeal to what is highest and noblest in a man.

It is told of Florence Nightingale that her mother used to praise her 'beautiful letters,' was proud of the 'European reputation' she had won among learned men, and wanted to know why she could not be happy in cultivating at home the gifts which God had given her. To Florence Nightingale these things were not gifts to be cultivated, but rather temptations to be subdued. She strove to say to God, as she once wrote, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord! *not* Behold the handmaid of correspondence, or of music, or of metaphysics!' 'That power of always writing a good letter whenever one likes,' she said in one of her pages of self-examination, 'is a great temptation'—a temptation, if such it be, to which, it must be confessed, she continually succumbed.

But any dreams which she harboured of literary distinction she put resolutely away from her. 'Oh God,' she whote in her diary at Cairo, 'thou puttest into my heart this great desire to devote myself to the sick and sorrowful. I offer it to thee. Do with it what is for thy service.'

2. But there is another side of Christ's life, equally important, which is implied in our text. Jesus was not only in touch with man, He was also in true touch with God. And the object of His coming to earth was that men, through Him, might also be brought into genuine touch with God. How sad and hopeless the position if Jesus were only in touch with men, however perfect and complete that touch! Then He could only die *with* them. He could only be somewhat as Buddha, who to a large extent was in genuine sympathy with human need. But Jesus came with a message of hope and joy. He came from the Father with whom He was one. He revealed the Father to us, and the ultimate aim of His work was, not merely to be in real sympathy with our suffering and fallen condition, but to bring us back to God, to bring us into close and genuine touch with the unseen.

What is it to be in touch with God? Everywhere you find that men have some conception of a higher Power, but you cannot say that everywhere they are in genuine touch with the living God. The savage, with his belief in some wrathful Being whose anger has to be averted, and with his peculiar ideas as to how he may escape the anger of his god, is as far from being in real touch with God as was that princess of whom we spoke from being in touch with the needs of her people. How different is the view of God that we get through Jesus Christ—that of the holy and merciful Father, with whom in our hearts we may be brought into close and abiding contact, whose will is revealed to us, and whose strength is made perfect in weakness as we yield to that will in daily life!

In the Life of W. Holman Bentley, the Congo missionary, we read: 'I was speaking of the love of God, and how anxious He was to change our hearts and to fit us to go and live with Him in the

Blessed Home above; how ready He was to help and bless all who sought Him, when the sister of one of the Tungwa lads who had been with us some time, and is now a member of the Church, spread out her hands and cried most pathetically, "Oh God! where are You, that I may know You?" My eyes fill up even now, somehow or other, as I think of her cry. We talked on for some time, and I tried to assure her that He was very near, and would hear her whenever she spoke to Him. Then we talked of Jesus and His great love, and the other women joined in, much interested, and wished that there was some one to teach them at Makuta.'[1]

That, then, constitutes the twofold power of Christ, and in the text we have the whole round circle set forth: first, that Christ is in perfect touch with humanity; then there is implied, what is patent throughout the Gospels, that He is in as perfect touch with God; and the result is that through Him we, too, are brought into true touch with God, and are able to draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help us in time of need.

Christ's Sympathy.

Heb. iv. 15.—'We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.'

A RECENT writer has remarked that only one artist has painted Christ with anything approaching to perfection—namely, Tintoret. While some painters have represented the Divine aspect of the Saviour's life, and others its common humanities, he alone has succeeded in blending the 'Divine with the human, the common with the wonderful.' In his picture of the Last Supper, for example, we behold a common room with the lamps lit, the servants bustling about, and a homely gathering of real fishermen; but in the upper air of the scene, the haze of the lamplight has taken that wondrous azure tint with which afterwards the artist 'filled the recesses of his paradise.' The soft radiance of the heavenly light falls down full on the figure of the sad and weary and loving Jesus. It is this lustre of Divine majesty irradiating His lowly and homely humanity that we need to see in Christ that we may be drawn to Him as our great High Priest, who, while He has passed into the heavens, the almighty Son of God, is yet touched with the feeling of our humblest infirmities.

1. Notice first His wonderful *keenness* of feeling. There are many people who have very little feeling. They have what is termed a tough rind. Such people may sometimes come through a great deal, without much suffering, but can never come to much themselves, nor afford much help to suffering humanity. But Jesus was, perhaps, the most exquisitely sensitive Man that ever lived. Intensely sensitive to Nature, and drinking in illustration of highest truth from her homeliest appearances, He felt most keenly anything that could touch the feelings of His fellowmen. Unlike many people who, because they do not feel their own trials very keenly, nor crave for much sympathy amidst them, cannot understand the sufferings and cravings of more sensitive natures, Jesus was so touched by His own troubles, and had such a longing for Divine and human sympathy in the midst of them, that He is marvellously quick to understand, and ready to sympathize with the most insignificant sorrows of the most sensitive souls.

2. But the sympathy of Jesus is as *wide* as it is ready. Human sympathy is for the most part a very limited thing. People sympathize with those they like; and most of them do not like very many. Quick to sympathize with those who sympathize with them, and to regard all the wrongs and trials of those they care for only in the kindest light, in what a different light do they look upon those in whom they have no interest. But the sympathy of Jesus is as wide as the human race, because He not only loves those who are lovable, or who love Him, but has a fellow-feeling for all mankind. He, whose exquisitely sensitive soul was thrilled by the beauty of a lily and moved by the fall of a wounded sparrow, is keenly touched by whatever can touch a human heart, whether high or low, good or bad, a friend's or an enemy's. Thus, for example, while His heart goes out to the guileless Nathanael, and He can sympathize with the man's earnest effort to be true, and with the heartiest sympathy discern and appreciate the honest worth which lay beneath all St. Peter's proud impetuos-

[1] *W. Holman Bentley*, 320.

ity, He can also sympathize with the shame of the woman taken in sin, and, instead of lifting up to her a flinty face full of stiff rebuke, He bends His head in silence to the ground before He says to her: 'Go, and sin no more.'

In one of his letters James Smetham, the artist, points to the wide range of Christ's sympathies. 'Every believer realizes by experience that Christ is the only perfect sympathizer. "I'm not perfectly understood," says everybody in fact. But if you are a believer you are perfectly understood. Christ is the only one who never expects you to be other than *yourself*, and He puts in abeyance towards you all but what is like you. He takes your view of things, and mentions no other. He takes the old woman's view of things by the wash-tub, and has a great interest in wash powder: Sir Isaac Newton's view of things, and wings among the stars with him; the artist's view, and feeds among the lilies; the lawyer's, and shares the justice of things. But He never plays the lawyer or the philosopher or the artist to the old woman. He is above that littleness.'[1]

3. And His sympathy is as *deep* as it is ready and comprehensive. There are many whose sympathy is ready enough in every direction, but there is no depth in it. They weep at many a sorrow, but their tears are as soon forgotten as they are quickly dried. But Christ's sympathy is as deep and enduring as it is quick and ready. And the reason of this is twofold. He has been tempted in all points like as we are; and yet He is without sin. We all know that there is nothing which can deepen sympathy so much as trial. In order to sympathize with another deeply you must put yourself in his place; and you can never put yourself in his place till you have been put there yourself. You may truly sympathize with a man who has lost a wife or child, but how much deeper is your sympathy after you have yourself come through that terrible bereavement. You can feel for a man who is prostrated by a wearisome and weakening disease, although you have never had an hour's sickness in your life; but you can never suffer with him like the man who has himself been the victim of that disease. It is only the poor who can sympathize with the poor, whatever the charity of the rich may do; only the aged who can fully feel for the aged, however kindly may be the attentions of the young; and only parents who can understand a parent's joys and sorrows. However kindly our hearts, however sensitive our dispositions, and however vivid our imaginations, we have all to go to the school of sorrow to be perfected in sympathy; and to this school had even the Son of God to go that His sympathy might be made perfect. There was no power in heaven which could enable Him to put Himself in our place till He had actually taken upon Him our nature and suffered in our stead. He must have loved us with an ineffable love and felt for us a marvellous sympathy before He left His Father's throne, or He never could have made so great a sacrifice on our behalf; but never could He feel for us in that former heaven as He can to-day. Never did He know what a flood of sympathy could overflow His heart for the bereaved, till He wept Himself as a mourner among fellow-mourners beside the grave of Lazarus; nor did He know what a boundless compassion could fill His soul for sinful man till He carried their sorrows and bore their sins. But having sounded the depths of human sorrow, He is able to sympathize to the uttermost with every sufferer. He can sympathize with the poor because He has been poor; with the weary and heavy-laden, because He has been tired and worn; with the lonely, misrepresented, and persecuted, because He has been in their position. And because He was also tried by fear, by sad surprise, by mental perplexity, by the hard conflict with evil, and by great spiritual depression, He is able to feel to the uttermost for those keenest sorrows of our earthly lot.

[1] *Letters of James Smetham*, p. 297.

The Universality of Temptation.

Heb. iv. 15.—'Tempted like as we are.'

1. The soul of man, in this passage through the years of time which is the ante-chamber and exercise ground to an eternal existence, has to go through temptation. And from the first dawn of human history, from the first beginning of each individual life, man is ever on his trial; tempted to do wrong and resisting, tempted to do wrong and falling. Man comes into life fitted and equipped to meet temptation, as he comes fitted and equipped to provide for his bodily wants. The soul comes with reason, with conscience, with

knowledge, with will, with grace; and as the day goes on, the question is ever presenting itself, how shall it use that characteristic and unique prerogative of will; which will it choose of the things before it: how will it decide between what it ought to do, and what it would be pleasant to do; how will it decide between the present moment, and the unseen and distant, but inevitable future? And what is all human life but this; man having in his freedom to *choose,* to choose under all kinds of circumstances, all kinds of feelings, under the stress and force of all kinds of motives; having to choose and *choosing,*—the right or the wrong—going straight onward or turning aside; giving proof of the strength and mastery over himself by which he can make his higher self govern his lower self, by which he can make his weaker and poorer and baser wishes yield to his nobler will?

What is the whole moral side and interest of human history but this—how man bears temptation, how he comes out of his trials? Political history, social history, the advance of civilization in its higher sense or its lower, the progress of arts and knowledge, all this is of great and undeniable interest; but there is a record and story of deeper interest still, which is to be completed only beyond the years of time—the story which tells how men have played their part as moral beings; how under each new opportunity or emergency, they have been faithful to truth, to duty, to goodness, to God, to grace, or have been blind to them and betrayed them. The beginning of the history of the First Man, the prelude and figure of what was to follow, was the history of a trial, a temptation, a defeat. The first scene in the history of the Second Man was a temptation, a victory; the type and first-fruits of what man might hope for. The Bible opens with man ensnared and vanquished. It closes with the great sevenfold promise to 'him that overcometh,' and with the vision of the glory of those that have overcome. And what is all that is written between the first page of it and the last but the continued record of how, to men and to nations, there came the day of opportunity, the day of visitation, the day of proof; and how that day was met, how they bore themselves in it, and what were its issues?

You cannot open a novel of the last fifty years without meeting in one form or another, high or debased, the pervading interest of human trial. These novels may exhibit it in false, poor, or fantastic shapes; or they may unfold its multiple and changing complications with that perception of the finer lines and shades of character, with that deeper penetration into those dim recesses where the secret of its motives and its self-delusions is hid, which are as much the gifts of our time as our deeper knowledge of nature. But whether they do it ill or well, whether they teach us, or mislead and corrupt us, they equally attest the universal presence of trial in man's life; they draw that life as one which would be without meaning if it were not for ever meeting that which proved and tested it.

2. That is what man's life looks like, when watched from without and at a distance. But we have to do with it much more closely than as spectators and critics, than as the audience who look on at the play and pass their judgment, or bestow their momentary sympathy on the actors. In this great scene—how great, how eventful—*we* are the actors too. We watch the game, and we forget that we see in it the image and reflection of what we are ourselves doing. But we are ourselves part of that world in which human souls are on their trial, in which each man in all the infinite varieties of state and circumstance has his task and mission assigned him by his Maker and his most Holy Judge; his call to do or to suffer, and with all that is necessary in providence and grace, if he will, if he chooses, to do and to suffer according as God appoints him: where each man, day by day, as the thread of his life runs on, is made to disclose himself, the realities of his character, and the powers which bear supreme sway in his heart and shape his choice. And choose he must, moment by moment. He knows what he ought to do, he feels what he would like to do, and, with his awful doom of freedom, he can take which he will. We cannot live, we cannot think or wish, without this searching of intentions, this trial and revealing of hearts. One by one, the pages of our life are turned; and we can no more divest ourselves of our freedom of choice than we can escape from the atmosphere around us, or from our shadow in the sunshine. What we see in the great lives in the Bible finds place in the most commonplace of our modern

lives. He was 'in all points tempted like as we are.' We may turn the words round and say with reverence that, as He was tempted, so are we, even the humblest among us—tempted, tried according to the measure of what we can bear, but as truly, and with all depending on the issue.

You feel perhaps as if you had no concern in what we gravely call temptation. You see, on one side, temptations yielded to with such inconceivable weakness and folly that you cannot even understand them. You see, on the other, temptations so monstrous and revolting that you simply shudder at them; you pass on and you have nothing to do with them. No; they are temptations which are none to you; on you they have no hold, and if that were all, you might walk through life and not think of temptation. Let us leave them, only remembering in our intercession those to whom they *are* temptations, and all the misery with which they fill the world. But *you*, it may be, have been ever kindly nurtured and carefully brought up. You have never known want, and the mean thoughts that want can bring with it; or, if you have been pinched and straitened, you have been taught, and you have had the example, to bear up bravely and work cheerfully. You have been guarded within the fence of home. Gentleness, confidence, love, have been ever about you. You have been taught to honour what is good and excellent and holy in friends, in principles, in deeds. You have been kept, perhaps, from the sight and words of sin—unless, repeating the history of the first temptation in Paradise, your curiosity has led you to search into and to learn evil which you need not know, which it was better for you not to know. And with all these chances for you, all these blessings of God's Eternal Providence, can you suppose that you are not on your trial? What are the tempers which, after all these advantages, you show day by day? Cannot people, with all this, yet be in their daily life selfish, ill-natured, peevish, too fond of money, unjust, untrue, unkind? Are you safe from continual, habitual, indulged worldliness, from bad temper, evil speaking, censoriousness? And will not God, for such things as these, and for what we and our characters have become in the years during which we have let these things go on, will He not call us into judgment? Are not these temptations? Is there not here enough to test the soundness of our hearts, the purity, the steadiness, the integrity of our purposes? Is not this to be on our trial?

The hour is coming which must betray what has been going on, not only in those great storms of passion or adversity, those great critical decisions of will for or against what is right, to which we often confine the name of temptation, but in those secret, undisclosed, prolonged workings of choice, of effort, of self-surrender, which prepare men for what they do. We rise each morning to meet what will try us, will show what we are, and, touching some spring, some dormant motive deep down in our nature, will reveal the truth about us to One who sees us. And, as we go through each day's proof and trial, we are fitting ourselves for the event of the trial of to-morrow; and the current of our life and character is set by unperceived and insensible influences, either towards that Eternal Life which God has prepared for man, or towards that Eternal Death from which there is for the soul no rising. And on this spectacle of human trial, of human preparation for the Eternal Future, the great love, the great *anxiety* of God, —may I use the word?—throws the awful light of that world which is not yet ours. Above the huge, appalling accumulation of human temptation, of human falls, of human victories, rises the unutterable mystery of the sympathy and partnership in temptation of the Incarnate Son, to tell us that the highest success here was not the thing which man was made for, but goodness, and truth, and love. Amid the hopeless wrecks of human history, the fatal disasters of individual lives, there is planted the Cross of Redemption and Recovery where our shame and our hope are joined, where the Crucified stretches forth His arms to embrace and console the tempted and the defeated in this mortal struggle for life or death.

The Temptation of the Son of God.

Heb. iv. 15—'In all points tempted like as we are.'

However much the temptations which our Lord had to encounter resemble those in which we find ourselves from time to time, we feel that His experience cannot in the last resort bear comparison with ours, because we are by nature sinful; but His human nature was, by virtue of the special

relation in which it stood to His Divine nature, inherently incapable of yielding to temptation.

This objection certainly raises deep questions, which it is well worth while to try to formulate precisely, though we may have to admit our inability to provide a final answer to them.

1. We shrink from believing in the real temptation of Christ because we fear that in so doing we may be ascribing to Him some sinful contamination. In our own experience temptation is so commonly the result of past sin, and is so implicated with sinful habit, and is, besides, so frequently followed by sin, that we find it difficult to draw the line between temptation and sin. To be tempted and to pass blameless through the temptation is rare among our experiences, and therefore scarcely among our conceptions. We have not been scorched by the fire, but we have been sullied, we think, by the smoke. We may have quickly poured out what entered the mind, but it has left a tang in the cask which taints all that is in us. Temptation and sin become closely associated in our thoughts. And so when in Christ we see no sin, we conclude there has been no temptation.

We must, then, keep in view that temptation is not sin. A man may sinfully put himself in the way of temptation; one sin may be a temptation to another, but there may be, and often is, temptation without sin either as its accompaniment or as its result. The most violent temptations may arise from indispensable appetites, commendable feelings, unavoidable circumstances, heroic purposes. The man who has been weeks out of work and has bread neither for himself nor for his famishing children, and who is daily confronted with an easy but fraudulent or degrading means of earning money, is severely tempted, but he commits no sin unless he yields and resolves to acquire the illicit gain. In such a case the temptation arises out of an innocent appetite and one of the finest feelings of our nature; but who for a moment could suppose it was wrong to be hungry, or sinful to desire that your children have bread? To feel the wildest cravings of natural appetite and eagerly to desire its relief is innocent, and sin begins only when the will gives way and resolves to gratify the appetite by forbidden means.

Thomas à Kempis notes five stages in temptation. First, he says, there occurs to the mind the bare conception, then the clear mental picture of the gratification, after that a gloating pleasure in it, to which succeeds the wicked inclination and assent. Plainly, in the first stage there is no sin, and scarcely in the second, although here danger looms on the horizon; but it is only when the evil thing is delighted in that sin begins; not the bare knowledge that the forbidden object is attractive and delightful, but the letting the mind dwell upon it and find pleasure in it.

2. Again, the severity of temptation is felt, not by the man who yields to it, but by the man who resists it. We are always apt to conclude that because Christ did not sin when tempted He can know none of the pain of resistance. Just as when we see a practised gymnast perfectly performing his various feats we think it must be easy to him, and lose sight of all the training and nervous anxiety and immense effort he has put forth to achieve this apparently effortless result. But so obvious is it that it is the man who resists temptation who knows the pain of it, that it almost needs no remark. Take two men in money difficulties to whom a shady escape is offered. The one jumps at the offer at once, quieting his conscience with the usual arguments, and indeed scarcely spending any thought upon the matter; the other becomes restless and agitated, spends sleepless nights weighing present relief against duty, measuring the disaster which is likely to befall his family, his business, the good name of his firm, pressed almost beyond endurance by the urgency of his need, and recognizing the ease and impunity with which he may glide into prosperity, but at length puts from him the temptation and faces loss. There is surely no question which of these two—the victor or the vanquished—suffers the more pain. As well might you ask whether the soldier who malingers and spends the day of battle in hospital, knows more of the hazards of war and the difficulty of victory than his comrade who is found in the front of battle, with many wounds, but with his country's flag held fast. The man who has promptly surrendered to his vicious inclinations and given himself to all manner of indulgence knows nothing of temptation, of its pain and persistence and violence, compared to him who all his life through has been conscious of a

strong bias to evil, but has resolutely crushed it, often with groans and torment.

3. But it may be felt that even if Jesus was exposed to temptations as violent as those which drive us to sin, yet He had aids to resistance which we lack. Being Divine, He must have found it easy to resist sin. Temptation was with Him an unreal thing, a mere show or play, a drama with a foregone conclusion. How could He feel thirst who was Himself the living water, or hunger who could feed five thousand at a word? What need had He of prayer, or what sense of helplessness compelling Him to cast Himself on another's compassion, while He Himself could grant all petitions? It is this double life which perplexes us, and often leaves the impression that Christ was only playing the part of a man, while not really human; that He prayed not from any sense of insufficiency in Himself, but merely as an example to His disciples; and that when He ate and drank He was merely accommodating Himself to human ways, and could quite well have lived without; that, in short, He did not really resemble us in our constitution, nor was subject to the laws under which we live, but merely assumed certain appearances to serve His purpose.

To think this is seriously to wrong our Lord by gravely underrating the sacrifice He made in becoming incarnate. A true incarnation involves just what the Gospels tell us of Christ. He was subject physically to the same laws as ourselves; if He fasted He necessarily became hungry, if He walked far He was fatigued; if He fell He was bruised; if pierced He bled. His body was as dependent as ours on food, air, and other material influences. And as He had to maintain His body as we have to maintain ours, so had He to maintain His spirit by the very same means that we require to use. His human nature was no more independent and self-sufficing than ours; He had to maintain Himself in fellowship with the Father, and His strength was derived from the indwelling of the Spirit. Our Lord's resistance to temptation was a human resistance. His Divinity may be said to have ensured His triumph, but His triumph could be achieved only by His use of means which are open to all. Had He thought as little and as lightly as we do of the Spirit's help, had He not spent in watching and prayer those nights which others spent in sleep, He could not have triumphed.

The truth is that our Lord's ability to work miracles was a serious aggravation of His temptation. Temptation is strong in proportion to the ease with which the desired object can be attained. If but a word, an act of will, a look lies between us and what we crave, it is enormously difficult to refrain. Temptation is at its maximum of strength where we have simply to let matters take their course, where non-interference is all that is required to attain our unrighteous object. Now, our Lord always had power to obtain what He might desire. To us there could have been no temptation in the wilderness, because we could not have created bread. To Him the temptation was incalculably strong, because He had creative power. Throughout His life He had to restrain infinite power. Who among men could have been entrusted with boundless power; what man could have been trusted always to use that power aright, never for the merely selfish attainment of personal desire, never for the summary removal of obstacles and overthrow of enemies? Was it easy for Christ to accept defeat and death and shame, when by a word He could have had in their stead glory and life?

We begin, then, to understand that Christ was tempted as we are; that He was not simply set forth as a champion to display His strength in the easy overthrow of every enemy that opposed Him; but that He has felt in His own person the difficulty of being righteous in this world, has known what it is to see strong inducements to do evil, and to feel the pain and weariness of maintaining a blameless, self-forgetting life; that He has viewed sin as a possible thing, and as a much easier thing than duty; that He has had to take precautions against sin, to agonize in prayer for strength to do the Father's will, and has found duty so hard and grievous that in making up His mind to perform it His soul was torn with agony and His body prostrated by the violence of His emotion; that in every part of His human constitution He has known the pain and conflict with which alone temptation can be overcome. He has felt the reasons and inducements that incline men to choose sin that they may escape suffering or death; He has had in His own soul, and as His own personal conflict, to curb desires clamour-

ing for gratification; He has Himself stood on human ground, and has felt the difficulty of holiness, the bewilderment and agony that can overwhelm a human career and beat a man down from God. In a word, He has been so tempted that, had He sinned, He would have had a thousandfold better excuse than ever man had.

The Sinlessness of Jesus.

Heb. iv. 15.—'In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.'

If Jesus is in very deed sinless, then everything follows that is vital to the Christian faith. If Jesus is sinless, I can believe that He is in the very secret of God, and that His revelation of the Divine Fatherhood is a true and final revelation. If Jesus is sinless, I can believe that He is the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. If Jesus is sinless, the fact that He everywhere and always showed a loving, trustful, hopeful attitude towards sinning people makes me able to believe that God loves them, and trusts them, and is willing not only to forgive them, but to redeem them by His grace. If Jesus is sinless, I can believe not only that I can be forgiven for my sin, as He says I can, but that He will give me strength to go and sin no more. All the great blossoming gospel of God's love is in this truth of the sinlessness of Jesus, as the splendours of summer are guaranteed by, and unfolded from, the first pure snowdrop of the spring. A belief in this beautiful truth is the pearly gate that opens the Kingdom of Heaven and its blessedness to all believers.

1. Now, when we study the New Testament writings one thing that becomes plain is this: they all record the sinlessness of Jesus. However the writers differ in their outlook,—and each of them has his peculiar outlook—however they may diverge from one another in their conception of the work of Jesus, there is one point on which all agree, and that is in conceiving Christ as sinless. St. John had lain upon the Master's bosom, and he writes, 'In him there was no sin.' St. Peter had known Him in the closest intimacy, and he writes, 'He died, the righteous for the unrighteous.' St. Paul writes, 'He who knew no sin was made sin for us.' And the writer of Hebrews, in our text, says, 'He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.' These are but a few texts out of many which indicate a perfect unanimity. Each writer may use the fact in his own way, but all of them insist upon the fact.

2. But while all that is absolutely true, yet it is far from being all the truth. It is quite impossible to build a Christian doctrine on any negative basis such as that. Granted that they had never known Christ sinning, is *that* any adequate proof that He was sinless? Had they been watching Him, with eyes unwearied, from the moment of His birth on to the Cross? On the contrary, they had known Him only for three brief years out of the three-and-thirty, and of these three years there was many a day when they were never in His company at all. What of the long years of village childhood? What of the crucial time of ripening manhood? What of these still and happy days in Bethany when Martha and Mary were the only company? There was no Peter to be observant there, nor was there any John to watch and to remember; there was only the love of woman so adoring that the universal voice has called it blind. Had any of the disciples detected sin in Jesus, we should never have had the faith that He was sinless. But to call Him sinless because they saw no sin is something that no reasonable man can do. For immediately, doing it, there rise before him all these unchronicled and unrecorded years, when Christ was hidden from the eyes of watchers in shadows that were enwrapping as the grave.

3. The true foundation of the doctrine lies deeper than any absence of the act. It was not thus, at least not thus alone, that the profound impression was created. What impressed men in Jesus Christ was not the absence of any *act* of sin. What impressed men profoundly was the absence of any *consciousness* of sin. It was that never once He made confession. It was that never once He betrayed penitence. It was that never once upon His lips was there whisper of remorse or of regret. The nearer that a man lives to God the more intensely active is his conscience, He becomes sensitive to shades of guilt that are imperceptible to common men. Yet Christ, who lived in a fellowship with God that is admittedly unique

and uncommunicable, never betrays so much as by a word the faintest trace of consciousness of sin. As Simon Peter grew in spirituality, he cried, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' As St. Paul advanced in the deep things of heaven he came to know he was the chief of sinners. But Jesus, who through all His earthly years was walking in perfect union with His Father, never once whispered, 'Father, I have sinned.' We see Him in those high and holy seasons when He was looking back upon His past. We overhear Him in His hours of prayer; we see Him in the agonies of death. Yet in such seasons, when purest and holiest souls feel above everything their need of mercy, the pure and holy soul of Jesus Christ was absolutely unconscious of that need. We have had very many shining saints in Christendom, and they have differed vastly from each other. But there is one point in which they are all kin, whatever their century or their communion. And it is this, that as they have wrestled heavenward, and grown in grace and fellowship with God, out of the depths has come the fervent cry, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner.' It is not your worldly man who utters that. It is not your nominal and easy Christian. As life in God becomes more real and deep, steadily the sense of sin is deepened. And the one thing you never will explain in the experience of Jesus Christ is that, with a life in God unparalleled, He never had any consciousness of sin. And He was always talking about sin, remember. It was a theme which was ever on His lips. He poured the vials of His withering anger upon the man who thought that he was righteous. Looking abroad upon the world of men He saw no hope for them except in penitence —'I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, *I have sinned.*' Now it was that fact which created the profound impression of Christ's sinlessness. It was that He had eyes to see sin everywhere—yet had no eyes to see it in Himself. It was that other men, when they are called to die, cry out into the dark, 'Father, forgive me'; but that the Master, when He came to die, said, 'Father, forgive *them*'—not 'forgive *Me.*' There is not a trace in Christ of any healed scar. There is not a trace of regret or of remorse. In all the history of the Redeemer there is no word of penitence nor any sign of shame. And all this, with a heart so sensitive—with a life so flooded and absorbed with God—can only mean that Jesus Christ was sinless.

For nearly two thousand years this sad, sinful, struggling, hoping world has clung to this happy and beautiful faith that there is one exception to the universal rule, and that, while there is not one of us men and women who has not gone astray, and fallen into both positive and negative wrong, we can look up and find Jesus standing there in the Gospel story pure, immaculate, sinless, holy, without spot or blemish or any such thing. Once in the course of history, as Robertson of Brighton said, God produced a Man without sin, whose 'purity was as that of snow on untrodden Alpine heights.' Other heroes have their feet of clay; He is gold all through and through. Other saints have had their moments or days of lapse, He never lost for one moment His firm and immovable grasp of the Ideal. Other leaders on the pathway of life have themselves wandered now and then a little out of the way; He ever walked in the centre and showed no trace of wavering. Other noble spirits have had to confess that, however high their final attainments and their last dearly won victory, there is somewhere in the recesses of their hearts the memory of one or more ineradicable stains; but He never showed the trace of such a feeling. Why do we love to look into the eyes of a little child? Because we see there something we have lost for ever—innocence; something we never find when we men and women look into each other's eyes. And why do we feel drawn, fascinated, subdued, when we face the Christ of the Gospels? Because we think we see in Him alone that lost Eden of the soul—its innocence—preserved in all its beauty and purity without flaw to the end. Because we see One who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and therefore made higher than the heavens in our reverence and worship. This has been the delight and happiness of our faith from the beginning, and if it were lost we should feel—should we not?—that earth had lost her one spot of pure glory, and heaven itself its perfect whiteness.

The Testimony to His Sinlessness.

Heb. iv. 15.—'Yet without sin.'

1. It is perfectly clear that the sinlessness of their Lord was believed and declared by His most intimate disciples. They were with Him day and night, in public and in private, in the midst of vast multitudes, and in the solitudes of the lonely hills. They were with Him in the warm, expanding light of success, and in the cold, chilling twilight of failure, in His sunny noon, and in His awful midnight. They were His companions when the praises of men fell upon Him like soft, spring showers, and they were present when the praises changed to blasphemies and contempt. They watched Him when the disciple band was daily multiplied, and they watched Him when His own treasurer sold His secrets to the foe. They had seen Him clothed in the glory of transfiguration, and they had seen Him wrapped in the desolation and gloom of Calvary. All through these crowded changing years they had been ever at His side, and what have they to say about Him? The test is unspeakably exacting, and the noblest man may pardonably fail before its application. What do they say about Him? They tell us little, or next to nothing, about His personal appearance. They give us no matter to aid our imagination in realizing the face of our Lord. We know more about the outward fashion of Julius Cæsar than of our Saviour; more about the facial characteristics of Socrates and Plato and Alexander. The outer shrine grew dim and paled, and became as nothing in the presence of the glory that dwelt within. They spent no time, as indeed they had no care, to describe the house, they were so awed and fascinated by the Tenant. It was His moral grandeur which so burned and blazed as to eclipse everything else, a grandeur which became almost oppressive in its weight of glory, and which often made them stand apart in silent fear. 'We beheld his glory, full of grace and truth.' His most intimate friends testified that He was 'without sin.'

2. And what do His enemies say? You may infer His moral majesty from the triviality of the indictments they hurled against Him. Remember the eyes of these men, eyes sharpened by hatred, malice, bigotry, and all uncharitableness. They had all the fierce, sleepless vigilance of men whose one purpose was to make out a case and justify themselves. They spied upon Him on every available occasion. They set traps for Him. They took Him unawares. They intruded into His festivities, they were watching when they stood by a grave. They were lynx-eyed to catch Him in a fault; and if He had made the slightest slip they would have made the welkin ring with their malicious shout. But what did they find, and what were the accusations which they made against Him? 'He eateth with unwashed hands'! 'He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners'! 'He is gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner'! 'This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.' Are not these the trumped-up accusations of men who have failed in their quest, who have found no rent in the vesture, no stain or defect in the moral wholeness of His life, and who are driven to legal conventionalities and to ritualistic trifles for evidence to prove His revolt against the august authority of the eternal God? Infer the moral majesty of Jesus from the trivialities of His foes. They could find no fault in Him.

3. But, pre-eminently, the witness for the sinlessness of Jesus is in the consciousness of Jesus Himself.

(1) First of all, He is absolutely silent concerning personal sin. In this alone He separates Himself from the noblest of the race. All other holy men 'wet their couch with their tears,' and bow their heads in humble penitence and contrition. We can overhear their sighs and moans, and they do not seek to hide their self-abhorrence. There is no exception to this in all the recorded autobiographies, in all the private diaries and journals, of the saints of God. Nay, it is not a matter of overhearing; it would seem to be a part of their very penitence to confess their sins to the world, that in the very confession they might glorify and magnify the grace of God. They shrink in pain from the pretence of appearing to wear an unsullied robe, and it would seem to be a vital part in the reality of their religious life to expose the rents and stains of their garments before the gaze of men. It is even so with the

Apostle Paul—surely, next to the Nazarene, the greatest of the sons of men. St. Paul never comes in sight of the ineffable glory of God without falling upon his knees and abhorring his sins in self-condemnation and shame. It is ever the same with the fine saints of monasticism, and with the saints of larger liberties—with St. Catherine and St. Francis, with Bunyan and Rutherford, and with all the nobler souls of our own day. Their self-consciousness of sin obtrudes, and clothes itself in public confession and public penitence and public supplication. And this, too, needs to be added, as a confirmed experience in the Christian life, that growth in spiritual refinement, growth in goodness, is accompanied by an increasing sense of incompleteness and by a deeper and more painful discernment of indwelling sin. We do not see sin as it is until we are 'putting on the new man,' and our progress in the spiritual enduement reveals increasingly the horribleness of the sin that remains. There are no wails for sin so deep and poignant as the wails of an old saint; the wails of the Christian novice are, by comparison, as the light and transient cries of a little child. When Timothy in after days was recalling for some wondering little company his privileged companionship with the Apostle Paul, he would dwell much upon St. Paul's bitter tears for his own sin, his long agonies and watchings, his humble penitence, his open confession.

But here is Jesus of Nazareth, who shares none of these things, who shows no sense of sin, who confesses none, and whose speech is never troubled and broken by the consciousness of His own shame. When St. Paul contemplates the glory, he falls upon his knees. Jesus contemplates the glory, and there is no shrinking, no timidity born of sin or incompleteness; He is most evidently one with the glory He contemplates, and no inglorious memory lifts itself with the menacing finger of humbling and condemnatory judgment. Jesus of Nazareth, unlike all other saints, is silent concerning His own sin.

(2) And there is something majestic and unique in the way in which He accepts the moral homage of men, without any sign of shrinking or pain. There is nothing which so hurts a real saint as to be eulogized as a saint. Homage pains a saint more than outrage; he can accept your criticisms, he feels wounded by your praise. You have sometimes been in an assembly which was blessed by the presence of some saintly man, and some speaker has begun to discant upon the saintly man's virtues and upon the beauty of his character. And have you not seen the saintly man bow his head in shame and confusion of face, as though the eulogy had plunged him into a flame? And why? Because his sense of sin and imperfection rose up in the presence of the homage, and his spirit refused the exaltation. 'And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying, . . . The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, . . . Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you.' And so is it ever with the saints of God, the homage of men is more painful than insult, and they shrink from it in fearfulness and awe. Now, see the contrast. 'When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord'! And there is no shirking on the part of Jesus, no rending of the garments, no sense of pain, no 'Stand up; I myself also am a man'! He quietly accepts the homage, as though He has a right to it.

(3) But, in addition to all this, and above and beyond all this, there is His own open claim, with its infinite implications: 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' That is not how saints speak, such as you and I have known. Such words would almost choke them in the utterance. 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' If it were possible for one of the saints of God to utter these words, a very crowd of condemning witnesses would immediately throng his own soul, and his profession would be broken into guilty hesitancy, and his stammering tongue would belie his own presumptuous claim. But Jesus makes it, makes it in the presence of His enemies, makes it in the presence of His friends, and makes it with a serene consciousness which can have only one explanation, namely this, 'I and my Father are one'; 'I do always those things that please him.' Jesus was 'without sin.'

Bronson Alcott once said to Carlyle that he could honestly use the words of Jesus, 'I and the Father are one.' 'Yes,' was the crushing rejoinder, 'but Jesus got the world to believe Him.'

A True Call.

Heb. v. 4.—'No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God.'

It is sometimes said nowadays that there is nothing to 'tempt' men to be ordained, that men of ability 'go elsewhere,' because there is so little to offer them in the ministry. But if men are thinking of being ordained with a view to making a 'good thing out of it,' with a prospect of an easy-going and comfortable life amid attractive social surroundings, we need not regret that they do 'go elsewhere,' for vocation to the ministry implies a surrender—a man gives himself up to God to be used in His service.

Rainy wrote when under call, awed by the load of responsibility about to be laid upon him: 'I trust I *am* convinced of it—that all happiness in life depends on following God's guidance in it . . . and there are higher ends to aim at even than our highest happiness . . . It is a saddening thought that one might be settled to be that most wretched of all possible beings, a popular, unblessed minister.'[1]

It may indeed be that God may call a man to high office, to responsible positions in His vineyard, but all this is in His hands; the motive which, in the last resort, brings us in ordination to the feet of our Lord should be the conviction that He is calling us to Himself, and that we desire at the bottom of our hearts, though conscious of our own weakness and sinfulness, to respond to His gracious call.

Kingsley awaiting ordination found his mind incessantly dwelling on that 'honour of which I dare hardly think myself worthy, while I dare not think God would allow me to enter on it unworthily. Night and morning for months my prayer has been "O God if I am not worthy, if my sin in leading souls away from Thee is still unpardoned, if I am desiring to become a deacon not wholly for the sake of serving Thee, if it be necessary to show me my weakness and the holiness of Thy office still more strongly, O God, reject me!" I prayed to be repulsed if it were necessary; and included that in my petition "Thy will be done." After this what can I consider my acceptance but as an earnest God has heard my prayer and will bless my ministry, and enable me not only to use myself but to lift others with me. Oh! my soul, my body, my intellect, my very love I dedicate you all to God.'[1]

[1] P. Carnegie Simpson, *The Life of Principal Rainy*, i. 108.

The questions, then, for one who is thinking of ordination to ask himself are such as these: Is God moving my heart with a love for His service, with a zeal for souls, with real love for the souls for whom Christ died? Do I experience the beginnings of a desire to do good to others, to bring them to a knowledge of God, to spend and be spent in the worship of God and the service of men? If so, there are signs of a true call. Do not put them aside. Ask constantly to be guided by God; ask advice from friends whom you can thoroughly trust. If God gives the inward call, He generally confirms it by shaping our outward circumstances; thus the outward and inward indications of a call go hand in hand. Constantly, therefore, make acts of self-oblation, giving yourself to God for anything to which He may be calling you: 'Show thou me the way that I should walk in'; 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth'; 'I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me.'

We may dwell, then, on certain aspects of this call. Consider—

1. *Its mysteriousness.*—Why does God call one and not others? We shall often be filled with wonder at God's dealings with us. Why am I called, and others—far better fitted apparently than I for His service, far better men—left to pursue other lines of life? These are questions which we can never answer. Why did God choose Jacob? Why St. Paul? St. Paul, indeed, ever seems to have had before him the thought of the mysteriousness of God's loving dealings with him; as, for example, when he speaks of God 'putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.' Or again, when writing to the Ephesians, the thought of the greatness of his vocation floods his soul and he breaks out: 'Unto me,

[1] *Charles Kingsley*, i. 51.

who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.'

We cannot tell why God calls one and not another. Certainly He does not call us because of our own deserts, and, as in other cases, so often in the case of vocation, His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts.

Dr. Denney tells us in his letters that 'one of the things never out of his mind' was why he should be a minister, whereas his father 'though in every sense of the term as good a man as I am' had a hard perished existence, working for a mean wage till he was 72.' And Carlyle wrote with much emotion of his father rising day by day to his monotonous routine while he, his son, had been given a task so influential and so splendid; and prays that he may show a zeal as honest and a life as blameless.

2. *Its eternity.*—When did God's call begin? Who shall say? For each one whom He creates He has some special vocation; and God, as St. Augustine says, is the Eternal Now: with Him is neither past nor future, and we were therefore all of us eternally in the mind of God. From eternity He thought of each one of us, and predestined us for some special vocation. 'The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.' Our birth was but a manifestation to the world of His eternal choice.

Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,
Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled
The heavens, God thought on me his child;
Ordained a life for me, arrayed
Its circumstances every one
To the minutest; ay, God said
This head this hand should rest upon
Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.[1]

If, indeed, His call of us be to the ministry, we may take comfort and courage from the thought that eternity stretches both ways; if He has called us He will not leave us, but will carry us through life to the endless end beyond. 'Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.'

[1] Browning, *Johannes Agricola in Meditation.*

3. *Its comfort.*—St. Paul begins two of his Epistles with the words 'called to be an apostle.' He found rest and comfort in the thought of the reality of his call, and it is not otherwise with ourselves; we, too, must learn to rest upon God's call, to find in the thought of it rest and support, and comfort and encouragement. There are, indeed, joys in the ministry of which the world never dreams—the wondrous joy of being able to help others to get further from sin and nearer to God; the joy of constant approach to Him in prayer and sacrament; the joy in the thought that God is really making use of us in His special service. Yet there are also, as in all great undertakings, days of darkness and disappointment; there are burdens to bear such as others cannot experience; there are very great demands made on heart and conscience in the 'cure of souls'; there is the constant pressure of the smallness of the visible results of any work that we undertake; there is the thought that comes upon us with terrible distinctness from time to time: 'Where are the nine?' In such times as these we may well fall back on the thought of God's call: 'I undertook this work, O my God, because Thou in Thy love didst call me to do it; and I know that Thou wilt uphold me in it.'

If God is really calling us, He will give us strength to face every difficulty with calmness.

Kingsley, after his first Sunday, wrote: 'I was not nervous for I had prayed that I might remember I was not speaking on my own authority, but on God's; and the feeling that the responsibility was on God and not on me quieted the weak terror I have of offending people.'[1]

Gethsemane.

Heb. v. 7.—'When he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears.'

We may take these great and solemn words as a commentary on the Gospel narrative of Gethsemane. It is remarkable that there should be here preserved a detail of that agony which is not found in our Gospels. The strong crying and tears found are not recorded by our evangelists, and so it would appear as though the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews was not altogether dependent upon them for his knowledge of Christ's life.

[1] *Charles Kingsley*, i. 53.

In any case we have here independent witness to the story of Christ's passion, and a very instructive hint as to the widespread and familiar knowledge of the story of our Lord's suffering which existed in the churches at the very early date of this Epistle, so that it could be referred to in this far-off allusive way with the certainty that hearers would distinctly understand what the writer was speaking about. Thus we get a confirmation of the historical veracity of the narrative that is preserved in our Gospels.

But the value of such words as these is their bearing upon things far deeper than that. They show us Christ as the companion of our sorrows and supplications, as a pattern of our submissive devout resignation, and as a lesson for us all how prayer is most truly answered.

1. First, then, take that great thought of the text, the thought of Christ as being our companion in sorrow and in supplication. In the days of His flesh—when He bore what I bear—in the days of His flesh He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death. The three evangelists who are our source of knowledge of that scene in the Garden of Gethsemane employ strange, and all but unexampled words in order to express the condition of our Saviour's spirit then. St. Matthew, for instance, uses a word which, in our Bible, is translated 'He began to be very heavy.' Only once besides is it employed in Scripture, and it seems to mean something like 'on the very verge of despair.' St. Mark gives us the singular expression, adding to it another one which is translated, 'sore amazed.' It has been suggested that a more adequate rendering would be 'began to be appalled,' and another suggestion has been that it might be adequately rendered by the phrase 'He began to be out of Himself.' Then comes St. Luke, with his word, which we have translated into English as 'agony.' And then there come Christ's own strange words, 'My soul is encompassed with sorrow almost up to the point of death'—declaring that one more pang and the physical frame would have given way.

What is the meaning of that—what is the explanation of all the passion, and paroxysm of agony, and fear, and bloody sweat, and horror-stricken appeal? Is it not a very unheroic picture? Is it not strangely unlike the spirit in which many men and women who drew all their courage from Christ have gone to their death? Is not the servant above his master here, if you will think of a Latimer at the stake, or of many a poor unknown martyr that went to his death as to his bed, and set that side by side with the shrinking of Christ? Well, we know the attempt to explain on psychological principles the flood of sorrow, of dread, and horror of great darkness that wrapt the soul of Jesus Christ in these last moments. Men say it is a pure and lofty soul shrinking from death. But the only explanation of it all is the good old one: 'The Lord hath made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all.' And so with the weight of the sins and the sorrows of the world, He began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

Now, more than ever, Christ, Himself without blemish and spot, was being numbered with transgressors. Now, more than ever, He understood the awfulness of contact with human guiltiness and evil. The draught from which He recoiled was the draught of His people's iniquities charged against Himself. The hour He would fain escape was the hour of His conscious sin-bearing. With clear, open, comprehending eyes He saw the hideousness of our disobedience. With a soul which refused resolutely every palliative and concealment, He realized the curse of God which we deserve, and which He was determined to exhaust for us. As Dods puts it: 'His atonement was nothing more than His quietly and *lovingly* accepting all that sin could do against Him.' [1]

Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent,
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him,
The little gray leaves were kind to Him;
The thorn-tree had a mind to Him
When into the woods He came.

Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content.
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When Death and Shame would woo Him last,
From under the trees they drew him last:

[1] *Later Letters of Marcus Dods, D.D.*, ii. 122.

¶ There is a creature the Lingula—described by Professor Arthur Thomson as a living fossil—the direct ancestry of which can be traced for millions, perhaps several hundreds of millions, of years, which has not changed one whit in all that time. It has stood still, and been left far behind by other creatures pressing on and upward. It still exists, but the plain rule that Nature teaches is that to stand still is to lag in the rear, and usually to be blotted out.

Let us then go on unto perfection, for it is impossible to renew those who fall away. This is the law of all life. Nothing is born mature. It passes through a period of growth, and it must grow or die. The parent who is delighted with the innocent helplessness of his child, and rejoices in its efforts at speech, becomes seriously alarmed if this lisping, tottering, help-requiring state threatens to become permanent.

Would that cessation of growth in the spiritual life created as much dismay! Would that it seemed as monstrous and unnatural to have our spiritual as our natural growth checked! It would be a startling revelation to us all were our discernment of our spiritual condition as keen and direct and true as our vision of the body. What do you honestly believe you would see yourself to be? Have you spiritually made the growth due to the time you have been a Christian, or are you still a child? Have we grown up to maturity? Have we grown beyond our associates, or are we conscious that they stand head and shoulders above us? Physically, we once needed to be lifted if we were to see or touch certain things: we should be humiliated were it so still; but is it so spiritually? Or do we now need to put ourselves into a constrained attitude when we wish to attend to things that once were on our natural level? Are we able to do the spiritual work of the world? Do we find ourselves now standing face to face with things that once towered above us and seemed unattainable? Can we stand alone now? Are we 'men in understanding,' able to see for ourselves what is good, having within ourselves a strength sufficient for all the needs of life? The being born again is not everything; the growing after birth to maturity is much more, is the end for which birth is alone valuable.

(1) This writer incidentally furnishes us with two tests of maturity. The one is that the mature are teachers of others. 'Considering the time which has elapsed,' he says, 'since you became Christians, you should now be teachers of others.' The grown man does not need his father to earn his food, and his mother to take him on her knee to feed him; he earns food for himself and for others. So the mature Christian is independent of his former teachers, and can himself instruct the ignorant. At first sight this test of maturity seems to give a fairly good result. Teachers abound—parents, Sabbath school teachers, ministers, journalists who volunteer theological instruction, the countless contributors to our magazines, and authors without number. Every one seems to have something to teach. But if you subtract from this mass of teaching all that is mere echo and all that is erroneous, how much remains? How many of us—for this is this writer's question—how many of us have for ourselves solved the problems of Christianity in our own time, and are therefore able to teach others? How many men are there among us to whom a perplexed soul would go, sure of finding light and help? We all of us feel from time to time the extreme difficulty of believing what our fathers believed; where are the men who can give us a firm footing again? There are such men, happily; but are they not few indeed in comparison with the mass of Christians? But, according to this writer, every Christian has a duty not only to himself, but to the world. He must grow spiritually, not only to preserve himself from being a monstrosity, but that he may be able to help other men.

(2) The second test is that the mature man 'has his senses exercised to discern good and evil.' That is to say, by habitual use his senses have acquired such quickness that he has an instinctive nausea for what is unwholesome, and a relish for what is nourishing. The child in its earliest stage has to be fed, unconscious of what it is getting, and not able to choose; in its next stage the parent has always to be telling the child, not always with effect, what to eat and what to avoid. By the time manhood is reached, experience over a wide range of foods has produced an instinctive sense of what will nourish and what will injure. The adult exposes himself to ridicule if he is always asking, 'Will this or that do me harm?' So, says this writer, the mature Christian should not be dependent on others to tell him whether

this or that doctrine is injurious or helpful. The mature Christian does not need to be told what to believe and what to reject. He needs no priest to act as nurse, to taste his food for him and tell him what to receive and what to do, in what sense to understand God's Word and how to use it. He is a man able to choose for himself, and to discriminate between good and evil.

2. The second fact regarding the Christian life which this writer wishes us to observe is that *this growth,* which is essential, *depends on the truth we receive.* He compares Christian truth to food: that is, Christian teaching does for the inner man what food does for the body. The body cannot grow without food; neither can the spirit come to maturity save by the reception of spiritual truth. But he divides Christian truth into two grand kinds, and these he represents by milk and solid food. Milk represents traditional teaching: it is the product of that which has been received and digested by others, and is suitable for those who have no teeth of their own and no sufficiently strong powers of digestion. Like infants, they can receive only what others have thought, having no independent power of their own to investigate for themselves and form their own opinion about things. This milk, or traditional teaching, is admirably adapted to the first stage of Christian life, but cannot form mature Christians. The other kind of teaching he compares to solid food, which the individual must chew and digest for himself. It is true, physically, that poor and thin diet makes poor and thin blood; that if a man is to spend much strength he must eat heartily. Spiritually it is equally true. Growth comes by nutrition. Without partaking of sound and wholesome truth the spirit cannot grow or be strong.

It might be said that all he means is that in order to right moral conduct and growth of character, sound moral principles and suitable precepts are requisite. If the savage who has been accustomed to eat his enemy and bury his own children alive is to grow out of that condition, he must be taught that these practices are wrong. This, however, is not the meaning of this writer. He does not refer to the direct inculcation of duty, but to the teaching of doctrine; and he says that the Christian grows in proportion to his reception of sound doctrine. You may begin with very small and diluted doses, with milk; but if the Christian is to do any good, if he is to grow to a vigorous maturity, he must learn to receive solid food; and what is in the writer's mind is not practical precepts, but the doctrine of Christ's priesthood, precisely such a doctrine as men who know nothing about it are apt to denounce as antiquated, fantastic, technical.

If in the past sound doctrine has been too highly esteemed, the opposite error is more likely to betray our own generation. Men never seem to themselves to be monotonous and wearisome if they repeat six times a week that doctrine has not always been accompanied by genuine spiritual life: as if it were a discovery that milk does not put life into a statue or a doll, or that spring rains do not make posts grow and blossom. No sane person affirms that doctrine gives life, or that wherever there is abundance of doctrine there is a proportionate abundance of righteous living. This were to make the same mistake as to suppose that because without rain the harvest cannot possibly come, therefore the more rain you have, the better the harvest, or that the wettest parts of Scotland are also the most fruitful. What is affirmed is this: that the truth we receive and use is our true spiritual nutriment, without which we cannot make growth.

¶ What nonsense we used to talk when we said that 'it did not matter so much what a man believed, that the great thing was to live well!' We had the tiresome contrast between creed and conduct, a contrast which I have no doubt had at one time a moral value, in a community, for example, in which the traditional faith had never been disturbed; but a contrast which had no sense whatever, and might easily become the minister of evil in a community which was only too ready to hear that the delicate barriers of the soul had no sanction in God, that those high doctrines concerning God and man, concerning Guilt and the difficulty of forgiveness, were no longer so sure, that, in fact, 'they didn't know everything down in Judee!'

And now, in the midst of all this palaver, the world has gone wild, has broken loose. And where has it broken loose? Through what sluicegate has the black flood poured? Through what bulwark, ruined now, and shattered, and under-

mined? Simply for this reason, namely—*Europe to-day is not unanimous about God.*[1]

The Christian Teacher.

Heb. v. 12.—'By reason of the time ye ought to be teachers.

1. The mature Christian ought to be a teacher *because of his assurance of Christian truth.* A man, in this age, who does not encounter much that is fresh and even startling in this department, can hardly be said to be alive. One who, in the course of an average life, has not changed or modified some of his views of Christian truth and doctrine, can hardly be said to have grown. A great deal of the truth of Scripture is given *germinally,* as a seed which keeps throwing out new growths in the course of years. The Saviour said that there were things which His disciples could not understand at the time, but which would be clear to them later. God often gives a central core of truth, and then leaves it for human research to formulate the truth. For example, He lays down the truth that all things were made by Him; that the universe is ultimately the result of His creative will. Science investigates, and attempts to explain the physical facts of creation. The Bible gives us no information about God's methods. Science may discover the method if it is able; and it is reasonable that science should give us new light on these methods, and should modify or change our views concerning them. To all that new light we may rightly open our windows. All that we are asked to hold by as Christians is that core of truth that our Creator, and the world's Creator, is the ever-living God. So the integrity of the Bible, as the Word of God, is a distinct thing from certain questions about the Bible. It is not affected by the showing of Biblical criticism that Solomon did, or did not, write the Book of Ecclesiastes, or St. Paul the Epistle to the Hebrews, or that the Pentateuch was, or was not, made up of a series of documents. On such questions we have a right to hold ourselves open to all the light which earnest scholarship can give us; and it would be strange indeed if some of our traditional views were not greatly modified, or even entirely changed.

[1] J. A. Hutton, *Ancestral Voices,* 13.

But we profess to be Christians, and by that profession we avow our faith in a certain body of truth. Its elements, indeed, are few and simple, but they are fundamental; and our Christianity takes all its character and all its meaning from them. Our Christianity, if it has any meaning at all, means Christ, the Divine Son of God, and not a mere man like ourselves. It means Christ taking our human nature on Himself. Christ living in our world, Christ crucified, Christ risen from the dead, Christ ascended to heaven and living there forever, and Christ the Judge of quick and dead. It means God, our Creator and everlasting Father, and the presence and energy of the Holy Spirit. It means salvation through faith in a crucified Redeemer. Whatever leaves this out is not Christianity. To the world, these may still be open questions; to us as Christians they cannot be open questions, any more than the foundations of a house can be left to be finished while the superstructure is going up.

2. He should be a teacher *because of his spiritual discernment,* his clearer perception of the things of the unseen world. That is something different from a man's feeling that he is growing old, and realizing that his friends are dropping around him, and that he must soon die. Any man will be made to feel that in the course of nature. The seaman may see the rocks and shores fast falling behind, and hear the roar of the surf, and yet have no outlook ahead. The outlook is one of the great things in Christian experience. As by reason of the time the old scenes and the old friends fall into the background, we ought to be getting clearer views of the great moral and spiritual truths which have their roots in the unseen world, and a deeper sense of their importance and power. It is not strange if a young Christian simply *believes* in the things which are not seen. It is strange if the older Christian does not *feel* the power of the world to come. It is one thing to *assent* to the truth that 'the things which are not seen are eternal'; it is another thing to *apprehend* that truth, and to take it into life as a working principle; to realize that the things on which heaven stamps a value—love and faith and purity and truth and good conscience—are the paramount things, and to make everything give way to these.

That kind of spiritual seeing has a teaching

power. It is of the very essence of all teaching that the man who sees what we do not see brings us to his feet to learn. When we want to know about the stars, we go to the scholar who has the telescope. And the life which one lives by faith in the unseen teaches. It does what all true teaching must do—it excites attention, it awakens inquiry, it communicates enthusiasm. St. Paul says, 'Our conversation, our citizenship, is in heaven.' The stranger who tarries among us for a little while, born of another race, subject to another government, clad in another costume, receiving his instructions from beyond the sea, all his hopes and interests centring in that country which he sees with his mind's eye, all his expectation converging towards his return thither—that stranger is a marked man. He awakens our curiosity to know something of his country and institutions; and, as we talk with him, we catch something of the flavour of that land which we never caught from the descriptions of our geographies. A ripened Christian, with his citizenship in heaven, brings to us in like manner the flavour of the heavenly world. The world learns how a man may live and thrive on meat which they know not of; learns the power there is in those heavenly qualities of meekness and faith, and poverty of spirit, which seem to it so puerile; learns how he can endure as seeing Him who is invisible. A quality steals into his life and words which gives the worldly man hints of a country strange to him, and a subtle attraction gets into his life which affects the most world-hardened heart.

3. He should be a teacher *because of the restfulness of his faith.* We count it strange if natural manhood does not bring with it increased composure, tranquillity, balance. Shall we count it any less strange if, with the lapse of time, Christian manhood does not become better poised, more restful and quiet, less easily thrown off its balance? Have we not had experience enough of God's strength to make us settle down on it, and trust it? Have we not found out so well how much better He can take care of us than we can take care of ourselves, that we have learned, not only to put ourselves in His hands on occasion, but to stay there all the while, and to be uneasy only when we do not feel the pressure of the Everlasting Arms? That kind of restfulness has a teaching power. You know how naturally, in any time of danger or confusion, all eyes turn to the man who is calm and self-poised. Even the gay, dissolute heathen poet had learned to admire the man just and firm of purpose, and eloquently pictured him as one whom neither mobs, nor the frown of tyrants, nor the wrath of storms, nor even the world falling in ruins, could disturb; but a higher lesson is taught by him who can say, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' We are seeking rest. These men who have come to Christ and have found rest have power to teach us and to tell us where to find it. We Christians, who by reason of time should have entered deeply into this rest, ought to be teachers.

Progress.

Heb. vi. 1.—'Let us go on unto perfection.'

PROGRESS is a word much used and much misused; but it is a significant fact—and a fact which ought to be peculiarly significant to those who profess to regard all religious movements as reactionary—that for the whole idea of progress, in the modern sense, the world is indebted to the Christian faith. Christianity created the passion for progress; nations have been progressive in proportion as they have been Christian; and historical comparison shows us that the more nearly a people has approached to the spirit of the primitive faith, the more safe and rapid has been its progress, in most of the higher meanings of the term.

Of all the writers in the New Testament the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the one most justly entitled to be called 'the Apostle of Progress.' The Epistle to the Hebrews, therefore, is perfectly in keeping with the essential genius of Christianity. Looking back into the

'Twas on a tree they slew Him—last
When out of the woods He came.[1]

2. Whatever there may be all His own and beyond the reach of common humanity, experienced in the solemn and awful hour, yet it is also the revelation of a companionship that never fails us in all our struggles, tears, and prayers. Oh, how different that makes our passage through the lonely experience of our human life! There are times in every life when all human affection and all human voices fail in the presence of a great sorrow, and when you feel that you must tread this path alone. Although loving hands are stretched out to me through the darkness, and have grasped my own and helped me to stand, yet nothing will still the aching of the solitary heart except the thought of a Christ who has suffered it all already, and who, in the days of His flesh, offered up, with strong crying and tears, His prayer unto Him that was able to save.

You remember the old Roman story—grand in its heroic simplicity—of the husband and the wife resolved to escape from the miseries of a tyrant-ridden world by suicide—which to them was less criminal than it is to us—and the wife first of all struck the dagger into her own heart, and drawing it out, embrued with her own blood, handed it to her husband, with the dying words 'Paetus! it is not painful.' The sharp edge that strikes into your heart has cut into Christ's first, and the blade tinctured with His blood inflicts only healing wounds upon us. He is our Priest because He has gone before us on every road of sorrow and loss.

Christ's Obedience.

Heb. v. 8.—'Though he were (R.V. "was") a Son, yet learned he obedience.'

HUMANITY needs more than the Incarnation. If God really comes into human life in Jesus Christ, we have a right to expect that by some achievement, by some signal and dynamic act, He shall break the captivity of mankind, heal men of their disease of sin, and bring the soul from death unto life. This is essential to Christianity. Christianity is not, after all, merely the religion of the Incarnation. It is the religion of the Atonement. It is that religion at the heart of which lies a saving act of God which will lift up fallen humanity, making a way of escape from sin. We have a right, then, to expect from Christ, the Incarnate Word, some achievement commensurate with the task of saving mankind. To such an achievement the New Testament witnesses. The New Testament may be called the Book of the Achievement of Christ, the Incarnate Word. Christianity is the spiritual movement set agoing by that achievement. The grand opportunity of every man, henceforth, is to appropriate and profit by that achievement. Let us try to see what Christ's achievement actually was—and is.

1. A careful study of the Bible will show that Christ's achievement is set forth as *obedience*. The whole Bible glorifies Jesus as the one obedient man. The Old Testament is here in harmony with the New in that it demands obedience, preaches obedience, despairs of obedience, and prophesies the coming of One who shall save by His obedience. All this longing for the obedient man is met in Jesus. The New Testament writers see this clearly. They exult in the fact that the obedience demanded by God and refused by fallen humanity has been marvellously realized in Jesus. This is the secret of that ultimate marvel, His absolute sense of guiltlessness. There was no flaw in the harmony between His soul and the oversoul of God. The slightest sin, that is, the slightest act of disobedience to God, would have infallibly destroyed that harmony.

¶ I remember one perfectly still morning, says Dr. Newton H. Marshall, when I looked out upon Loch Lomond and found it impossible to distinguish between the lake and the shore because the pine forest on the shore was so perfectly mirrored in the water. But even while I gazed I heard the 'chug-chug' of the first of the lake steamers for the day, and then a slight tremor passed over the surface of the lake and the beautiful illusion was gone. It would not come again all that day. So the faintest tremor of disobedience would have shattered that oneness of Christ with God which makes Him stand before us as unique. His life was one of perfect obedience.

2. The perfect obedience of Christ constitutes the uniqueness of His life. In all other things

[1] Sidney Lanier, *Poems*, 141.

His life is like other men's. He said wise things —other men have said the same. He was generous and compassionate—so have others been. He healed the sick—He was not alone in that. He wrought miracles—others have done the same. He died a cruel death though innocent—alas! how many such deaths there have been! But He is the first and only man whose whole life was the unwavering expression of His obedience to God, and He is the first and only man whose death was the signal and demonstration of the perfection of His obedience. Now, it is not too much to say that the obedience of Jesus involved Him in the most awful penalties the human imagination can devise.

(1) First of all, there was physical suffering. Crucifixion involves agony of the flesh, intolerable thirst, and awful weakness such as we cannot picture to ourselves. To contemplate such pains for long would be to risk one's reason.

(2) Again, crucifixion involved the suffering of those He loved best. We can understand a hero choosing to be tortured that those dear to him might be spared, but when Jesus was crucified, His mother, His brothers and sisters, and the men and women He loved and who trusted in Him, were filled with agony of soul. Not only did they see His pain, but they were overwhelmed with a sense of His failure and shame, and they concluded that, after all, the One in whom they had believed was Himself a deluded man.

(3) And, further, the whole weight of human wickedness must have rolled in upon His soul in that terrible hour. You and I have felt indignant, helpless, almost hopeless sometimes, when a child we had prayed for grew to be worldly, godless, vicious. We have been horrified at the awful perils of life when we have seen an effort to alleviate the sorrow and sins of London starved for lack of small funds, while thousands of pounds are squandered on a few old books, and millions upon the trade which supplies men and women with drink. What, then, must have been the agony of the mind of Christ when the Roman soldiers were gambling for His clothes and the Jewish priests were laughing in the face of His misery, He the while knowing that He had come as God's messenger that they might have life, and have it abundantly? No wonder He cried: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' The wonder is that He obeyed. But obey He did, 'even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.'

3. It was inevitable that this perfect obedience of Jesus should lead Him to the Cross, because of the fact that humanity was fallen. The perfectly obedient man was bound to suffer, should he appear in a world of which it could be said, 'all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.' The men of greatest religious and moral insight in the past, the men who did most to influence the race spiritually, have seen, in one way or another, that perfect obedience and fallen humanity could not be compatible. This can be shown by reference to the three greatest religious teachers that the pre-Christian world knew. Buddha taught that perfect obedience would result in death—so complete a death that the men would never return to life again (as all men otherwise must), but would be absorbed in Nirvana. Plato tells us in his 'Republic' that the man truly obedient to God would be regarded by his neighbours with contempt and suspicion, and would afterward be thrown into prison, beaten, and at last crucified. And have we not all read, over and over again, the prophecy of Isaiah: 'He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief'? And surely it is logically certain that the perfectly obedient man must have suffered disaster in this world. For habits of life, social structures, and ways of conducting every institution, were built up upon foundations of sin. All human views were warped by sin, all human laws were vitiated by sin, even human ideals of good and bad were perverted by sin. The sinless man, therefore, was a man out of place, in the way, a rebuke and outrage upon all that humanity held respectable and fair. It is significant that it was actually the Jewish nation that rejected Christ, and the religious leaders of the Jews—doubtless honourable men wanting to do right—that compassed His death.

Suffering and Obedience.

Heb. v. 8.—'Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.'

WHY, asks Dora Greenwell, was the sacrifice of Christ's death so pre-eminently meritorious, so infinitely prevailing with God? why do the sacred writers attribute an efficacy to it which it was impossible that the sufferings of unconscious though innocent victims could possess? Because, to say nothing of the intrinsic value of this sacrifice, it was, above all others that have ever been offered, a free, conscious, and willing one. The Man Christ Jesus was, of all created beings—as far as we know their history—the only one who chose His own destiny, who foreknew and accepted its full conditions; who saw a great need and responded to it: 'Lo! I come.' 'My leave,' said the acute Frenchwoman, 'was not asked before I came into the world,'—a saying in which all that the human heart can urge against God and His appointments lies hid. Why should I be called upon to endure, to forgo so much? Had the choice been permitted me, I might possibly have declined it. Our Saviour's leave was asked. His fulfilment of His Father's will was voluntary; He saw the end from the beginning; saw it even in the beginning, and walked onwards to that end, seeing His own destiny and feeling His own freedom. 'I have power,' He says, 'to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again.'[1]

For, if we consider the matter, we shall see (1) that Jesus was not unwilling to obey; (2) that He was not unwilling to suffer; and (3) that He had made the discovery that the obedience and the suffering went together. This is something very different from the Greek proverbial philosophy. The writer has safe-guarded himself from misunderstanding by prefixing the statement of Christ's innate sonship, 'though he were a Son,' as distinct from acquired experience, and by an addition expressive of the value of the results of the education of the Son, that 'He became the author of eternal salvation to those that obey him.'

1. 'Though he were a Son': then He was always in the Divine harmony, and always about the Father's business: no need for the Father to say to Jesus, 'Son, go work to-day in my vineyard,' and wait for Him to make up His mind; for if He did say it, the reply in the nature of the case would be 'Lo! I come . . . I delight to do thy will, O my God.' It is instructive that the thought about the Father's business was in Christ's mind so early in the Gospel: it was not the dying Christ who said it; the dying Christ might say 'It is finished,' He could not say 'I must be about my Father's business.' That obedient spirit of Sonship was there from the first. To learn obedience did not, for Him, mean learning to be obedient, as it does with us. Jesus never had to flagellate Himself, as we sometimes have to do, and to say to Himself 'Learn to obey.' 'I delight to do thy will' is the opening word of the Sinless Life.

2. Neither was Christ unwilling to suffer. That truth looks out at us from page after page of the Gospels. It is not merely that He tells His disciples to count the cost of association with Himself (and that in so doing He had already done His own share of the calculation), but that He kept on counting it, although the figures when added up made a total that was more and more full of sadness and dread. 'The Son of man must suffer many things,' and these are some of the things that He must suffer. Whatever they were, He accepted them: He watched the cup filled for Him and then drank it; 'He walked up to the Cross as if it had been a throne.'

3. Now if this is what is meant by learning on the road of experience, and if ethical perfection, in the sense in which Jesus acquired knowledge, comes on the path of suffering and in connection with it, we are able to say of our Lord that 'His experience verified His intuitions and justified the cost of His ideals.' His manifestations of Divine Love were by means of a painfully acquired experience, and the verdict is that it was worth while. So far from its being a case of doing a thing once, and then registering a warning to oneself not to be caught that way a second time, Jesus was not only capable of repeated acts of surrender in a long-drawn-out drama of sacrifice, but He has carried back the same spirit into heaven, and if it would be any help to us, or addition to

[1] Dora Greenwell, *The Patience of Hope*, 12.

the revelation, He would be ready for a second Incarnation, and its necessary consequence, a second Cross; otherwise He would not be the same Jesus. Only the writer of the Hebrews reminds us that once was enough: 'for now once, in the end of the ages' Christ has appeared and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself! 'He offered one sacrifice for sins for ever,' and that exposition of Divine Love is regarded as adequate and final.

How good it was of Him to let us learn from the book of His own experience, watching what Jesus did, and asking what Jesus would do. How good to have such a clear statement of both sides of the experience of the soul, the pains and the gains, the expenditure and the income, and to be permitted to try our hands at keeping a life-account like His, and having it audited with heaven's approbation as was His. What a privilege to have our little crosses planted in the shade of His great Cross, with its overwhelming moral elevation, as He threw Himself away for our salvation in a great consummating act of surrender and obedience. It is when we study Christ's perfect way to a perfect victory that we begin to realize what costly work righteousness is, and what costly experience love is, and how only those who suffer with Him are able to obtain the one or exhibit the other. Especially is this true of love which is Divinely joined to sorrow, so that no man can put them asunder. For, as Madame Guyon says:

Sorrow and love go side by side,
Nor height nor depth can e'er divide
Their heaven-appointed bands;
Those dear associates still are one,
Nor, till the race of life be run,
Disjoin their wedded hands.

Jesus, avenger of our fall,
Thou faithful lover, above all
The Cross has ever borne;
Oh, tell me, life is in Thy voice,
How much afflictions were Thy choice,
And sloth and ease Thy scorn.

Thy choice, and mine, shall be the same,
Inspirer of that holy flame,
Which must for ever blaze!
To take the cross and follow Thee
Where love and duty lead, shall be
My portion and my praise.

Growth in the Spiritual Life.

Heb. v. 11.—'Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.'

St. Paul had the same experience. To the Corinthians he had to say, 'I brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not yet able to bear it: nay, not even now are ye able; for ye are yet carnal.' This was not the educated man's supercilious disdain of the ignorant: it was, on the contrary, the lament of the sympathetic teacher who recognized the uselessness of revealing advanced truth to men who had not taken the initial steps. As well read Browning or Hegel to children who have yet to learn the alphabet.

Necessarily, the teacher who suffered this experience in its most painful form was our Lord Himself. Even of those whom He had taught with care He is compelled to say, 'Are ye also yet without understanding?' And even at the last, when for many months He had day after day sought to widen their view, He had simply to keep to Himself much that was burning in His own heart. 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.' Some of the very points which perplex the modern mind, or which have caused discord during the entire history of the Church might have been made perfectly simple had these first disciples been readier scholars.

¶ As Westcott says, there is no sadder fact in the whole history of the Church than that Augustine did not know Greek. And Matthew Arnold asserted that the whole face of modern theology would have been changed had Newman known German.

In correction of this common fault of backwardness and indisposition to learn, the writer of this Epistle bids us observe two facts.

1. The first fact is that *growth is expected in the Christian*. Indeed, he tells us that if we are not growing we are dying. There is no third condition: he has in view only the alternative, either we are going on to perfection, or we are falling away.

In the course of a long life a man may be several moral persons, so dissimilar that if you could find a real individual that should nearly exemplify the character in one of these stages and another in the next and so on to the last, and then bring these several persons together into one company, they would find themselves a most heterogeneous party, would oppose and despise one another, and soon separate, not caring if they were never to meet again. [1]

'One of the most interesting aspects of the life of St. Francis of Assisi,' says his biographer, Dr. Paul Sabatier, 'is the continual development revealing itself in him. He is one of the small number to whom to live is to become active, and to be active is to make progress. There is hardly any one except St. Paul in whom is found to the same degree the devouring need of being always something more, always something better.'

Our course is onward, onward into light:
What though the darkness gathereth amain,
Yet to return or tarry, both are vain.
How tarry, when around us is thick night?
Whither return? What flower yet ever might,
In days of gloom and cold and stormy rain,
Enclose itself in its green bud again,
Hiding from wrath of tempest out of sight?
Courage—we travel through a darksome cave;
But still as nearer to the light we draw,
Fresh gales will reach us from the upper air,
And wholesome dews of heaven our foreheads lave,
The darkness lighten more, till full of awe
We stand in the open sunshine unaware. [2]

Resurrection and Judgment.

Heb. vi. 2.—'Of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.'

THE impression is sometimes entertained that the religious man is living exclusively in and for the next world. He stands gazing into the sky and loses sight of this world, an impractical visionary. And there have been religious dreamers and fanatics who have given point and sting to this charge. They have separated themselves from this world and lived aloof from it, absorbed in cultivating a subjective isolation, monastic in spirit if not in form. This, however, is not the true spirit of the religious life, which, while it does look for a city which hath foundations, eternal in the heavens, and lives under the spell of its presence, yet is also deeply rooted in this world and is alive and alert in all its interests and activities.

The writer of this Epistle did not wish to eliminate the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment from the Christian scheme. They are vital parts of it. What he wanted to do was to alter the Christian's relationship to these great realities. In other words, he wanted to put resurrection and judgment in their proper places—to assign them their proper position in our Christian thought. And he wanted to do this because he saw they had an undue place—an overwhelming place—in the minds of Christian people. They had been made the outstanding features of Christianity and had thrown other more important things into the shade.

We shall rise from the dead, we shall be judged, but we are not to be always thinking of these things. These things are not so to fill the foreground of the picture that the still greater things of our Christian faith shall be hidden, or even lie in the background.

That these things have held this undue place in the past every student of Church history knows full well. Christianity has been made too much a matter for the other world. It has been made too much a matter of judgment, and even condemnation. It is the undue stress on the other world and its judgment which the writer of this Epistle seeks to get rid of. It is in that light we shall look at these words.

1. To speak of the resurrection of the dead is to call up the thought of the other world into which the dead pass when they rise. It is impossible to think of resurrection without thinking of the world we call eternal. The thought of that other world has, and should have, a place in our thought, but it should not have the chief or primary place. Many a Christian life has been spoilt by giving it the foremost place in its thought. And for this reason—that thus Christianity has been alienated from this present world and not applied to everyday affairs. So Christianity has been set in the future instead of the present tense.

[1] Foster, *Essays*.
[2] R. C. Trench, *Poems*, 36.

And, as we all know, it is so much easier to be good in the future than in the present. Intentions are so much easier than actions. To say 'I shall do' is easy. To say 'I do' is difficult. Other-world Christianity is easily reached. This-world Christianity means constant and strenuous effort.

This world is only the first—that is, the lowest—class, but it is the important class. Failure here means failure higher up in the school of life. If the scholar's eye is always looking on to the highest class, he will never be ready for it. To be intent on the tasks before us is to be ready for the higher tasks which come later. The Christian whose thought is always of heaven will not be prepared for its high services. Heaven, therefore, must be in the background of our thought.

¶ The famous mediæval saint, finding that his ecstatic communion face to face with Christ left him unfitted for his drab prosaic task, the next time the Vision came, said to Him, 'Lord, thou knowest this is the great joy of my life, but the poor have to go unfed,' and turned his back, and went to sleep.

2. To speak of eternal judgment is to think of God only as Judge. God is Judge, but we must not exaggerate that side of His nature. To do this is an injustice to Him. Would any father like to be regarded as only the judge of his children? God is not primarily a Judge but a Father. He judges, not to condemn, but to train and discipline and save. 'If thou, Lord, wert swift to mark offences, who should stand? But there is mercy with thee that thou mayest be feared, and plenteous redemption.' So wrote an ancient Hebrew, and we have learnt still better things of God from the face and words of Christ.

From the judgment of a mere judge we shrink. To the judgment of a father, if we are in our right mind, we appeal, since whatever it may be it will be for our good. To use the beautiful words of Dr. Walter Smith—

I vexed me with a troubled thought,
That God might be
A God whose mercy must be bought
With misery.

But there's no wrath to be appeased
In heaven above;
No wrath with bitter anguish pleased,
For God is love.

No pleasure from our suffering
The Lord could steal,
Or anguish of the meanest thing
He made to feel.

But on Himself the grief He took.
The pain and loss
And shame of sin, and its rebuke
Upon the cross.

For love rejoiceth not in pain
Of good or bad,
But beareth all, and still is fain
To make us glad.

Love circles us with mercies sweet,
And guides our way,
And sheds its light around our feet
By night and day.

O love of Jesus! love of heaven!
O holy Dove,
Teach all the ransomed and forgiven
That God is Love.

Too Late.

Heb. vi. 4, 6.—'It is impossible for those who were once enlightened . . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.'

THERE is no mistaking the meaning of an edict like that. The truth which it declares is not anything that was dependent upon circumstances which have now passed away. If those words were true in the circumstances, they are true in any circumstances. If they were ever true, they are true for ever. For the truth which they embody is a truth of the soul, an insight into the workings of the human spirit.

There is a good deal of thinking to-day—much of it very loose and very inexact, and some of it thrown into the form of definite, dogmatic propositions—which may be summed up in the familiar saying, 'it is never too late to mend.' A man, it is said, may wander far and sin grievously, he may fill up to overflowing the measure of his iniquity; nevertheless, God is good, His mercy endureth for ever, and at last—'far off,' it may be, but at last—all will be well for all. It is a comfortable and a comforting creed—if one dare hold it. Will it bear looking at? Will it stand the test of examination?

'God is good; his mercy endureth for ever.' But does universal love imply universal salvation? Is the love of God the only needed factor in the salvation of men? He 'willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth'; but is God's will alone sufficient to secure that all men shall unfailingly be saved?

It is narrated of the eminent Swiss naturalist, Agassiz, that, wishing to study the interior of an Alpine chasm, he allowed himself on one occasion to be lowered into a crevice in a glacier, and remained for some hours at mid-day at a point hundreds of feet below the surface of the ice. Then he gave his companions the signal to draw him up. But in their haste they had forgotten the weight of the rope. The weight of the basket, of the tacklings, of Agassiz himself, had all been calculated, but the rope had been forgotten; the three men at the summit were not strong enough to draw him back, and he had to remain suspended in the jaws of the chasm until one of the party went to seek for assistance. When a man lets himself down into the depths of sin, saying to himself, 'God is good; his mercy endureth for ever,' and trusts to that to draw him up again, he is making a blunder not less fatal than the mistake of Agassiz might have proved: he is forgetting the consequences of sin upon himself.

'Never too late to mend'?—look where we will, we can find confirmation of it nowhere—contradiction, refutation of it everywhere.

1. It is not the doctrine of the New Testament. If we take all the words of the New Testament, and if we regard them as authoritative, there will be some of whom even at the last it will be true that it had been better for them if they had never been born. Blessed is he who is not ashamed of Christ's sternest words. The New Testament is a much sterner book than some of us like to think. There are shadows here that will not flee. Christ spoke of 'an eternal sin,' of which, if a man be guilty, he 'hath never forgiveness.' The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares of some that it was 'impossible to renew them again unto repentance.' St. Peter writes of men 'having eyes full of an adulteress, that cannot cease from sin.' St. John says, 'There is a sin unto death,' and then, though he had only just written, 'This is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us,' he goes on to say, 'not concerning this do I say that a man should make request.' And when we close the Book of Revelation, it is with these solemn words in our ears, 'He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still; and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still.'

¶ 'You seem, sir,' said someone to Dr. Johnson, in one of his despondent hours, when the fear of death and judgment lay heavy on him, 'to forget the merits of our Redeemer.' 'Madam,' said the honest old man, 'I do not forget the merits of my Redeemer; but my Redeemer has said that He will set some on His right hand, and some on His left.'

2. What say the great students of human nature? Take up Victor Hugo's masterpiece, *Les Misérables*. Bishop Myriel's goodness has opened to Jean Valjean a door of salvation: 'He felt instinctively that this priest's forgiveness was the greatest and most formidable assault by which he had yet been shaken; that his hardening would become permanent if he resisted this clemency; that this time he must either conquer or be conquered, and that the struggle, a colossal and final struggle, had begun between his wickedness and that man's goodness.'

Milton pictured Satan a free agent, and yet saying,

> All good to me is lost;
> Evil, be thou my good.

Hear the guilty king in *Hamlet;* prayer is useless:

> When then? What rests?
> Try what repentance can: what can it not?
> Yet what can it *when one can not repent?*
> O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
> O limed soul, that, struggling to be free,
> Art more engaged!

And now beside your open Shakespeare lay these words from Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He is replying to those who say, 'True, we are all sinners; but even in the Old Testament God has promised forgiveness on repentance.' 'True,' he says, 'God has promised pardon on penitence, but has He promised penitence on sin? He that

repenteth shall be forgiven; but where is it said, He that sinneth shall repent?'

Says Whittier:

What if thine eye refuse to see,
Thine ear of heaven's free welcome fail,
And thou a willing captive be,
Thyself thine own dark jail?

When the Rev. Henry White of the Savoy Chapel was a curate living at the East End of London, he was rung up in the dead of night, and urgently implored by a woman to come and see her husband, who, she said, was dying. Mr. White dressed, and followed the woman to a squalid house in a court, where he found a man of about forty years of age, already within touch of the hand of death. He bent over the bed, talking to him, and offered to pray with him. As he spoke he noted a sudden gleam in the man's eyes; still he went on talking of things past and things to come, and then, as the woman stood sobbing her heart out, he knelt and prayed. When he rose from his knees the man was dead, his fast stiffening fingers clasping the chain of the curate's watch. The man was a noted burglar and a life-long thief, and even as he was dying, the sight of a gold watch-chain in the possession of a pre-occupied man was too much for him, and as Mr. White prayed to God to forgive him his sin, the dying thief tried to pick his pocket.

Impossible.

Heb. vi. 4, 6.—'It is impossible . . . to renew them again unto repentance.'

The main object of this Epistle is not to comfort but to warn the readers. In such a transition age as theirs and ours, men are in special danger of lax notions and lax conduct. The author shows that both men and ages have sometimes lost their great opportunity, and lost it irrevocably. He illustrates this appalling truth, in the case of individuals, from the history of Esau. That unhappy man sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; and when he began to realize the painful consequences of the act he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. The same truth is illustrated in the case of nations, by the fact that the generation which came out of Egypt sinned away their great opportunity. Their carcasses fell in the wilderness. They could not enter Canaan. He solemnly warns the Hebrew Christians that, in like manner, if they sin away their opportunity of spiritual salvation in Christ, it will be 'impossible' to save them by any other means.

This terrific truth is emphasised by the use of the word 'impossible.' He is speaking to those who have enjoyed the characteristic blessings of the Christian faith. If they, under the influence of an age of change and scepticism, become confirmed apostates, there is no hope for them. They have deliberately rejected the only remedy. In describing their participation in the gospel, the author uses the beautiful Greek conception of it rather than the Latin conception, with which we are more familiar. The Latin Church speaks of 'conversion'—a turning round from evil to good. The Greek Church, more intellectual, describes the great change as 'illumination'—the diffusion of Divine light through the dark soul of man. In this way the author of the Epistle before us describes those of whom he writes as 'enlightened.' Then he mentions four characteristic features of those who are thus 'enlightened.' First, they have 'tasted the heavenly gift,' the Divine manna, Jesus Christ. They have had an actual personal experience of living union with Him. Secondly, they have been 'made partakers of the Holy Ghost'; their hearts have been the temples of the Divine Spirit. Thirdly, they have 'tasted the good word of God'; they have understood the spiritual meaning of the Bible. Fourthly, they have 'tasted the powers of the age to come'; they have had personal experience of the supernatural life of real Christianity, and of the miraculous answers to prayer which real Christians receive.

Now, if any man who has had this experience of the Eternal Life falls away fully and utterly, it is 'impossible' to 'renew' him again unto repentance. He has consciously and deliberately rejected the only remedy. God Himself can provide no other. The author uses a very striking and terrible illustration from nature. He says that a piece of land may be so incurably filled with the seeds of thorns and thistles that the more it is watered with life-giving rain, the more prolifically it brings forth these obnoxious pro-

twilight of the past, the writer sees that the Christ whom he offers to the world is not a sudden creation unheralded and unforeseen, but the answer to many an ancient prophecy. Looking forward to the sunrise of the future, he sees this same Christ ascending into heaven, the 'forerunner' of a great army whose way He indicates and who must follow in His steps. From past to future is the great sweep of one progressive movement, and the centre of it is Christ. All the progress of the past leads up to Him; all the progress of the future starts from Him. And in this longing for improvement, this vision of that which is to come, this passionate desire of better things, the writer urges all his hearers to make that progress their own. 'Do not,' he cries, 'let us linger for ever in a school whose training is intended only for children, when a whole world of new truth, of higher knowledge, of deeper worship, is open before us.' 'Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ'—leaving, that is, the elementary teaching of Christianity, the first beginnings of its education, the familiar alphabet of its dogma and morals—'let us go on unto perfection.'

'Man,' says Browning, 'was made to grow not stop,' and again—

'Progress man's distinctive mark alone
Not God's, and not the beast's; God is, they are,
Man partly is, and partly hopes to be.'

1. What, then, is the true idea of progress? The word itself, in its lower applications, is suggestive. Progress means advance. But the locomotive makes progress only when it moves forward upon its track according to the laws of its mechanism. Let it fly the track, and how soon it buries itself in the earth and lies there a ghastly wreck! Progress means growth; but progress in the plant is not only growth, but growth ever toward a higher, fuller life. The principle of life within must ever unfold itself according to the laws of its own being, expanding always toward its own possible completeness—that is, such completeness as its nature admits of. The little seed of wheat grows up at last, not into thistledown, but into the cluster of golden grain; the bulb develops into the flower; the acorn unfolds into the stately oak. The insect crawls through its little life from the tiny egg to the natural caterpillar-state, then 'spins itself a coffin, becomes hard and shelly, but the life goes on, and it emerges at last a brilliant butterfly.'

Now apply this to man. He, too, begins life in the embryo—a mere bundle of possibilities—his powers simply 'powers of becoming.' For him, too, progress means advance, but advance ever along his appointed track and according to the laws and limitations of his own constitution; growth, but growth ever toward a higher and fuller life; expansion, but expansion always toward his own possible completeness, that is, such completeness as his unique nature is capable of.

2. Progress, then, according to the Christian conception, means the progress of man as man. It is the progress of man as distinguished from a mere change for the better of his circumstances, the 'appliances and embellishments of his life,' as one of England's greatest preachers has put it. It is the advancement of the essential man toward his goal. 'Let us go on unto perfection.' Nothing could have been farther from the writer's thought in giving this exhortation than a succession of changes for the better in the outward conditions of his hearers. He had taken to heart that deep lesson of the Master's own teaching, 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' 'After all these things do the Gentiles seek.'

I know our nation's vernal bloom is over,
  Vanished the springtide's dear, delicious days,
When simple toil amid the fragrant clover,
  With youth, and health, and hope, gave God the praise.
But do we walk, as then, in virtue's ways?

They say the storm has ceased its angry motion,
  Alcyone is sitting by the sea,
Her bird auspicious brooding on the ocean
  That peace is coming back to you and me,
But yet, I ask you, are our people free?

They tell me Ceres pours her horn of plenty,
  That barns are brimmed with heavy sheaves of gold;
One sack is sown—the reaper gathers twenty;
  The marvels of our wealth tongue hath not told;
But have we now THE MEN we had of old?

3. Then, if true progress means the progress of man as man, it requires the progress of the whole man, physical, mental, and moral. 'Let us go on unto perfection.' Man only dreams of perfection. God 'hath set eternity in their heart.' Man stands in conscious relation to something more lasting than the beautiful but transient world about him. He lives in the transient; he longs for the eternal. He walks in the real; he reaches forth toward the ideal. Here he 'labours and is heavy laden'; his only relief is in 'going on unto perfection.' His development, then, must be a progress that means something more than 'escaping hell' and 'winning heaven,' something that will not leave its votaries content with the Lotus-eaters on the yellow sands of life, or rest with impelling them ever so strongly toward a Mohammedan paradise. In short, it is a progress which can be satisfied with nothing less than 'going on unto perfection!'

4. We are brought, then, to face the practical question, How shall this be done? How shall we achieve this progress?

(1) Faith here, as elsewhere, is fundamental. Faith is that function or power of the human soul by which it confides in and relies upon the invisible —'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.' 'Without faith' it is not only 'impossible to please God,' but it is impossible to take the first step toward anything good or great in character or achievement. We are told that at a time when Spain had extended her conquests to the limits of the then known world, and held both sides of the Mediterranean at the Straits of Gibraltar, she proudly stamped upon her coin the pillars of Hercules with a scroll thrown about them on which she fixed the legend, *Ne plus ultra* —'No more beyond.' But one day a bold and adventurous spirit sailed out far beyond those pillars and discovered a new world of transcendent beauty and riches. Then the proud nation, convinced of her ignorance, smote the negative from her coin, leaving the words *Plus ultra*—'More beyond.' Faith is the true adventurer in human life, which, when we cannot *see*, will still 'go on,' which, when we have pushed our researches to the utmost bounds of positive knowledge, reveals to us another world of more transcendent beauty and riches—the world of the spiritual. It is through faith and faith alone that the worthies of all ages have made the riches, glories, and powers of that world their own—have felt as living forces the aspirations and the inspirations that lead on unto perfection.

(2) Again, we can hope to make true progress only as we press forward along the line of our highest ideals. These are not all idle dreams. They are 'the promises of God to the imagination' —a sort of pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night to guide us to our promised land of achievement and character. Every man is in a true sense the product of his ideals. 'As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.' But no worthy ideal was ever realized without infinite pains and effort. To be either good or great, we must

> do noble deeds,
> Not dream them all day long;
> And so make life, death, and that vast forever
> One grand, sweet song.

(3) Then, most of all, it needs to be insisted upon that it is progress 'in Christ' and toward Christ, beginning and ending with the Cross. Without Christ we enter the lists hopelessly handicapped. Without Christ we carry an incubus of depravity, a 'body of death,' which must prove fatal to all holy achievement. If we would succeed in this race we must 'lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,' and 'run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.' We must come in our weakness and weariness and lay down our burdens at His feet, and then rise up to find and finish our course in His strength. We must remember His warning words: 'Without me ye can do nothing'; but we must remember also, and make our own, those triumphant words of the great Apostle: 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.'

¶ Let me leave with you three questions, appropriate at every juncture of our sojourn in this world. I heard them put from the pulpit of St. Mary's, Oxford, more than thirty years ago by a good man, who, in the course of a chequered life, was often much misunderstood, and to whom many, partly for that reason, were much attached —the late Master of Balliol, Dr. Jowett. They were these:

Am I becoming better day by day?

Am I doing enough for my fellowmen?
Am I making this life the preparation for another?

Principles and Perfection.

Heb. vi. 1.—'Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.'

THERE cannot be growth apart from life, nor perfection without the first principles of Christ. We need to remember two things—that Christian life must have a beginning, and that the beginning is not the end. The rudimentary principles of our calling, as set forth in the first two verses of the chapter where the text is found, are fivefold—repentance which renounces, faith which embraces, resurrection which assures us that this life is not all, eternal judgment which assures us that this life determines all, and as central of the five the doctrine of baptism and the laying on of hands, which is, in effect, the doctrine of the great fact of the Holy Spirit. These five facts are also set forth as experience in two following verses. Enlightenment anwers to repentance, the heavenly gift to faith, the Holy Spirit to the reality of the doctrine, the good Word of God to the resurrection, and the power of the age to come to the eternal judgment.

'When God made man,' says Hans Andersen, 'He gave him five kisses, five fiery kisses, which are known as his senses,' and singularly enough, these principles of the life of Christ seem to be their spiritual counterpart. That is almost suggested in the last verse of the previous chapter. Enlightenment is seeing, receiving the heavenly gift is tasting, the hand resting upon us is touching, the impact of the good Word of God is hearing, and the power of the age to come is like an impalpable but pungent-smelling fragrance.

1. But the beginning is not the end. We must advance from these principles. They are but the alphabet which will enable us to form words, the railway which will make possible the journey, the blossom which may mature into fruit. There can be no language, or progress, or harvest, without these principles, but if we do not leave them life is frustrate, and their very purpose is denied. Yet such is the paradox of the Christian life that the more we leave them the more we cling to them, just as the building rising from the foundation rests on it the more tenaciously. 'We must never leave the foundation,' says Calvin, 'and yet to be always laying it would be ridiculous.' The grown man leaves the milk diet for solid food, but that does not mean that he is never to have a glass of milk and enjoy it.

So 'let us bear ourselves forward,' having our senses exercised by reason of use. All the Spirit-born are Spirit-borne, but there is need on our part for decision and for determined purpose. We must not allow the paltry things of time to arrest us. We want to be like Douglas Jerrold when a well-known bore laid hold of his coat in Regent Street one day saying, 'What is going on?' Twisting himself free he answered, 'I am.'

And our goal is perfection.

> So bolder grown and braver,
> At sight of One to save her,
> My soul no more would waver,
> With wings no longer furled.
> But torn by one decision,
> From doubt and man's derision,
> The fair and lovely vision
> Would follow through the world.

2. There is a perfection necessary to the start of the saintly life, an adjustment of the soul to the end in view. The babe may be a perfect babe, but 'the man that never grew up' is not a perfect man. Peter Pan is a delightful little figure in Kensington Gardens, but he is mythical in real life and in the Church of God. There is a perfection that precedes growth as well as a perfection that results from it. Should the early perfection be marred the progress is arrested, and there is no hope until the joint is set or the fracture healed. It is idle to attempt to go on to a fuller perfection with a broken leg. This adjustment is the open secret in holiness which is often 'hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes.'

There are also many perfections on the way to the ultimate. A builder may leave a house perfect as to the plan, but the decorator will say, 'Leave that and go on.' In his turn the decorator may pronounce the house perfect, but the furnisher will say, 'You must go on still'; and when he has done his best the artist will pronounce judgment and say that it will take months to tone its crude-

ness, while the gardener will declare that it will be years before the house can have a perfect setting. So we advance in the Christian life from one perfection to another, not as though we had already attained, either were already perfect.

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea! [1]

Dead Works.

Heb. vi. 1.—'Repentance from dead works.'

WHAT are 'dead works?' Whatever is not progressive is dead. Everything that lives grows; and a marked characteristic of its growth is that it repents of its 'dead works,' turns its back upon its effete past, ignores its fallen leaves, sloughs off its previous conditions as worn out and useless, forgets those things that are behind, and reaches forth to those that are before.'

This is the irreversible law of physical growth, both in the animal and in the vegetable world. A human body, growing healthily by assimilation of food and air, is every hour, from birth to death, steadily casting off its dead works. Every breath that we exhale rejects some of the impurities of the used-up material of the blood; the whole surface of the skin is, moment by moment, putting away material that has been used; and when this process called waste ceases, the body dies. When the mystery of life springs into activity in a grain of wheat, its outer covering, which has hitherto been an essential part of it, becomes its dead work; the growing shoot rejects it, ignores it, grows away from it, repents of it, so to speak, and pushes up into light and air. When the spring returns to us, the resurrection of the whole vegetable world is a commentary on the words of the text, as, high above the dense bed of fallen leaves, the cast-off dead works of many autumns past, the green branches wave in the sunshine.

It is not otherwise with the healthy growth of the human mind. Every truly progressive character is built up through a succession of definite departures from habits, opinions, experiences, attitudes, which were once living to us, but which have done their work. Where the aim of the moral life is high, a man discovers, as he looks abroad into the world, that his mental horizon enlarges. He finds imperfections in his old convictions; something within him, which he cannot resist if he will be true to his highest, pushes him beyond maxims and limits of thought and party watchwords which he once upheld. As he shells off his husk he is probably reviled—especially if he is in any sense a public man—as vacillating and inconsistent, and his shallow critics will triumphantly confront him with his past; they will root out an utterance from a 'Blue Book' of twenty years ago, or from a sermon preached when he was first ordained, and confront him with it; whereas it would be as reasonable to revile an oak tree as inconsistent, because it has left its acorn stage long since rotting in the ground. The converse of thus repenting of an effete past is social and intellectual stagnation, which repents not of dead works, but abides in the traditions of the past. Opinions that once were living and influential stiffen out into bigotry; principles petrify into prejudices. Such an one has a name to live, and is admired and belauded for consistency; but he is dead. These dry bones live not.

The same process, only in far greater intensity, obtains in healthy, Godward, spiritual growth. Allegiance to the progressive teaching power of the Spirit of God constantly necessitates a deliberate turning of the back upon what once were convictions; they must be left behind, like the garments of childhood. The impulse of growth comes to an awakened heart direct from God—nay, it is God. The heart that is conscious of the Spirit's striving must not live in the grave-clothes of the past. Its earlier struggles, its past experiences, its incomplete attainments, its limited views of God, its narrow conceptions of Divine Fatherhood and human salvation, must be left behind, as completely, as heedlessly, as the used-up atoms of the body are rejected through the skin, as the dead leaves lie round the trunk of the living tree. The heart is born from above, yea, and reborn from above again and again, as each spring-time of refreshing comes from the Spirit of God. It is being conformed to the image of the Christ.

[1] Oliver Wendell Holmes.

ducts. In like manner, our natures may be so much changed for the worse, that all good influences will only bring out more and more evil in us.

There is only one 'unpardonable sin,' and that is the sin of *finally* rejecting Christ. And that sin, remember, is unpardonable in *the very nature of things,* and not as the result of some arbitrary act on the part of God. It is very difficult, but not impossible, to commit 'the unpardonable sin.' 'In every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.' For Christ's sake the heathen are judged according to the light granted to them. Full and ample justice is done to all. And the great opportunity comes to all. But if that opportunity is lost, there is no other. There can be no other. God cannot provide any other. 'There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.' Mark it well—at some time, in some way, the great opportunity comes to all; but if it is finally rejected it cannot be renewed or repeated.

Finally rejected. We must beware of the Montanist and Novatian errors. The text does not mean that backsliders cannot be restored. We have many blessed proofs to the contrary. He who bids us forgive our brother seventy times seven will never hesitate to forgive us, however far we have wandered from Him, if we return to Him. But we may wander so far that the disposition to return will be utterly destroyed within us; will be replaced by a disposition to flee from Him. 'One fears,' says John Watson, 'that some will inherit hell and be content.' Large and ample opportunity is given to us; but if that be deliberately and finally rejected, it is 'impossible' to renew us to repentance.

Some cherish a vague hope that all will yet be well even for those who deliberately reject Christ. They cling desperately to the notion that in some way or other of which we have as yet heard no whisper, God will save those who intelligently refuse to be saved by His Son. All these thin and restless sentiments dash themselves to pieces against the solid rock, the immovable word—impossible. They are probably founded upon an utter misconception of the 'omnipotence' of God. That word does not mean that God can literally do anything. It means that He can do anything *consistent with His nature.* One attribute is necessarily limited by another. God is not mere Omnipotence, mere irresistible Force. That is the Mohammedan delusion. He is also Wisdom, and Goodness, and Love. The first Napoleon used to say that the word 'impossible' was not found in his vocabulary. But that was, of course, an epigrammatic exaggeration. The word 'impossible' is found even in the vocabulary of God. 'It is impossible for God to lie' (Heb. vi. 18). It is impossible for Him to alter the past. It is equally impossible for Him to save every man except through and in Christ. He will try to save every man by Christ. If any man is not saved, it will be that man's own fault. But every one of us *can* frustrate the love of God. By continually resisting God we can gradually change our nature. Our acts of deliberate rebellion harden into habits, our habits harden into character, and character may become fixed for ever. In the course of our probation we may bring ourselves into a condition in which the love of God ceases to attract and conciliate us, in which it repels and irritates us. Then all is lost.

How wonderful is the watershed of a great mountain range! Here is a little spring. It makes a small pool of water. The water overflows. Because it is on the south side of the watershed, the water flows evermore towards the bright and sunny South. You advance a few yards. Without knowing it, you have crossed the narrow watershed. There is no visible dividing line. But you see another little spring, with its small pool. The water flows forth; lo! it is turned now to the North, and it flows for ever toward the darkness and the bitter cold. There is such a watershed in your moral nature. Have you reached the fateful line? Have you crossed it? Alas! from this time forward all the springs of your life flow away from God toward the blackness of darkness and all the desolations of death.

It is useless to deny or ignore that awful possibility. Even Lowell, the sanguine poet of democracy, is obliged to utter the bitter cry of a lost soul:

> I hear the reapers singing go
> Into God's harvest; I, that might
> With them have chosen, here below,
> Grope shuddering at the gates of night.

There is no more terrifying page in Bunyan than that which tells of how the Pilgrim was led into a dark room and came on the unhappy man in the iron cage, a page that sets one shuddering as one reads. 'So long,' says Believer, 'as the smallest spark in a soul longeth for God and would be saved so long is the door of mercy open.' But what if even that goes out?

¶ Molapo was the most formidable enemy of Coillard's Mission work. He seemed to have a double personality. On Sundays and other occasions he would exhort his people to be converted, all the while that he was carrying on a systematic persecution of all Christians. When reminded of his *conversion*—

'Yes,' he said, 'I was awakened, exercised beyond the power of words to express. I have experienced in my own heart, with unspeakable delight, the sweetness of Jesus. But to-day you see I have sunk into sin, and I am always sinking deeper and deeper.'

'Poor man; and can you do nothing to escape?'

'*Moruti,* a man like you ought to know what the Apostle says: "It is *impossible* to renew them again unto repentance.' So to-day, you see, if I listen to the Word of God, it is only with the ears of the head; my heart, no, that hears them no more. I like the preaching (*thuto*); I like you. I shall do my best to build a school-house and a church. I do not like a place where the name of God is never heard. But that is all. It is all over with me. Ah, Monare, if you knew the power of that anguish which once laid hold of me, if only that could be renewed, do you see, it would cost me nothing either to send my wives away or to come and talk to you about my soul.'

'I tried to exhort him in God's name, but no mark of emotion or even of real seriousness betrayed itself in his own face. It is terrible to taste of the living, the true, and to return like the sow to her wallowing in the mire.' [1]

Full Assurance.

Heb. vi. 11.—'Full assurance of hope.'
Heb. x. 22.—'Full assurance of faith.'
Col. ii. 2.—'Full assurance of understanding.'

'FULL assurance'—there is something musical about the phrase when we hear it repeated and insisted on like this. Does it seem like an old-world music, remote from the style and taste of to-day? Does it fall upon our hearts somewhat as the chiming of ancient bells might fall upon the ears of a traveller who was passing hurriedly in train or motor beneath the shadow of cathedral towers—very charming in its own way, but quite remote from the purposes of the present journey? Full assurance is somewhat out of fashion. Long ago they had what were called the 'ages of faith.' Long ago people were able to be dogmatic with a clear conscience. Nowadays we doubt, we question, we grope, and in our better moods we aspire: but we are all more or less at the mercy of that interesting Devil about whom Olive Schreiner speaks—the gentlemanly and educated Devil who comes to us with his head on one side asking questions; and so we are by no means so sure as our fathers were about many points. And also we are in haste to pass upon our way, because there are some other things about which we are perfectly sure, and we want to get at them and fill our arms with them as quickly as possible. Nevertheless it might be good for us to sit quietly for a little while under the shadow of the apostolic certainties, and listen to these old-world bells that tell of full assurance. There is something soothing in the very sound of them. Can we make their music our own? Can we ever hear them, not from some lofty and ancient steeple only, but deep within our own hearts, like the bells of the city of Is, deep down beneath the heaving sea?

1. Here is the first note that sounds in our hearing—*full assurance of understanding.* You would almost guess, even if you did not know, that this was a phrase from one of St. Paul's letters. It is one of his characteristic notes: a great believer and a great ambassador for faith, he did not fail, as all the greatest believers have not failed, to pay almost as much honour to the intellect that understands as to the heart that believes; you remember how in a parallel passage in Philippians he prays for his converts that their love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all discernment. Here in Colossians he tells his readers how he wrestles towards this end; he wants them to know what great wrestling he has for them that they may attain this full assur-

[1] *Coillard of the Zambesi,* 69.

ance of understanding. His Epistles with all their magnificent strenuousness of thought are the best comment upon his words; they are athletic Epistles; he did not spare himself that his readers might understand. In the case of these Colossian readers there was need for specially energetic action. There were teachers arising who asserted that they had the true *Gnosis,* the true knowledge, the true insight into Christian doctrine: and if you only say a thing loud enough and often enough you will get people to believe you: it is possible in that way to deceive the very elect. St. Paul's wrestling for his readers was that they might be like the good hearers of our Lord's parable, understanding the word, so fully possessing it and possessed by it that there should be no room for evil to lodge and grow. It is an ideal that does honour to our human nature. They who slight intellect in the name of faith have the New Testament against them, not for them. There are no prizes in the school of Christ for stupidity, still less for credulity. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind as well as with all thy heart. And certainly if we want any encouragement to think out Christianity and to exercise our intelligence in regard to it, could we have any better challenge than these very letters of St. Paul, which show us the heights and depths we have to explore, which open up paths into the depths and the heights, and which summon us on every page to a full assurance of understanding? Says Anselm, 'It is surely a failure in reasonable conduct that one who has been established in the faith should not seek to understand what he believes.'

2. The next in logical order is the sweet chime of those words in Hebrews about *full assurance of faith.* It is needed to complete the thought we have just had before us. We must try to get an intellectual grasp of as much as possible, deeming that our minds were given us to exercise in the realm of grace and truth as much as anywhere else. Yet there are some things beyond all our seeing and measuring. If it is folly to sneer at intellect in the name of faith, perhaps it is an even commoner folly to use our understanding as the tape-line by which we measure the universe of light and love. Faith must not dissociate herself from understanding, because understanding gives reasonableness to faith; but understanding must not drive faith away as an interloper, because faith gives wings to understanding. So let us at least consider, and consider that we may covet, this full assurance of faith. There is a shallow and impudent assurance that is best described by the somewhat undignified word 'cocksureness'; it is without humility, without reverence, without depth: it is the attitude of shallow souls who have reduced truth to a few formulæ and for whom the universe contains no Holiest of All. This full assurance of faith is not like that. If we were to search for an historical example of it, we might select Joan of Arc. 'Are you in a state of grace?' her judges asked her. And her fine answer was this: 'If I am not, may God put me there! If I am, may God keep me there! I should be the saddest in all the world, if I were not in the grace of God.' There you have a soul going quietly and resolutely on in the appointed path, trusting every step of the way, yet trembling even while she trusts, and turning her trembling into prayer. And the full assurance of faith which is best worth coveting is an assurance which unites in itself the two qualities of humility and boldness, which ventures on the pathway to the unseen with humility, because it is the path to God, and yet with courage, because the great High Priest has gone on before.

3. And now turn to the last text—*the full assurance of hope.* For having drawn two baselines—one on the earth, in the understanding, and one up among the stars, by faith—we are ready to make exploration of the unknown and limitless future. Christian hope is about equally the product of these two factors—the understanding, working upon experience, and faith, which, even beyond the limits of understanding and experience, asserts the love and faithfulness of God. A hope without some basis of understanding would be an irrational hope, and a hope without some basis of faith would be a sorely bounded hope, hemmed in by narrow horizons of sense and time. 'We covet,' says the author of Hebrews; it is a strenuous word that might have been used by St. Paul himself. 'We covet that ye do shew diligence'—he wants to make his hearers strenuous too; and perpetual diligence is needed to keep hope fresh and strong in a world that is so often ener-

vating in its nearer climate and foggy on its farther horizons. But best is this special turn of his thought: 'We covet that *every one of you* do shew the same diligence unto the full assurance of hope.' The Church's hope will be kept alight in any case, somehow and by someone: Christ trims the golden candlestick and will not let it die. But the writer wants his readers to realize how much may depend upon each separate life maintaining its hope unto the end. That is the lesson that Matthew Arnold intertwines with the wreath he lays on his father's tomb—

> If, in the paths of the world,
> Stones might have wounded thy feet,
> Toil or dejection have tried
> Thy spirit, of that we saw
> Nothing, to us thou wast still
> Cheerful, and helpful, and firm!
> Therefore to thee it was given
> Many to save with thyself;
> And at the end of thy day,
> O faithful shepherd! to come
> Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

And we, too, do not know how much depends for other lives upon our maintaining our personal hope and purpose. The light in our lives may be to someone else God's very message of encouragement. If we let it go out, it may mean that for some soul near us there may be no more encouragement but only despair. For, as Amiel says, 'Every life is a profession of faith, and exercises an inevitable and silent propaganda. As far as lies in its power, it tends to transform the universe and humanity into its own image. Thus we have all a cure of souls. Every man is a centre of perpetual radiation like a luminous body; he is, as it were, a beacon which entices a ship upon the rocks if it does not guide it into port. Every man is a priest, even involuntarily; his conduct is an unspoken sermon, which is for ever preaching to others;—but there are priests of Baal, of Moloch, and of all the false gods. Such is the high importance of example.[1]

It goes without saying that the full assurance which is spoken of in all these passages is not the solving of all problems, or the answering of all questions, or the clearing away of all difficulties. But turn the passages over in your mind for a moment before we leave them, just to see what is the practical worth of the full assurance which is spoken of so musically. In the passage in Colossians, the leading thought is *comfort,* comfort in its true meaning of strengthening: and the full assurance hinted at there is enough for comfort and strengthening, a knowledge of God and of Christ sufficient to warm us amidst the manifold winter and rough weather of the world. In the passage in Hebrews about faith, the leading thought is *worship;* it is the thought of drawing near into the innermost, into the holiest of all: and the full assurance spoken of is enough to enable us to worship, to come with our sins and leave them at the mercy seat, to come with our fears and doubts and burdens and lay them down before the Father's throne. In the other passage in Hebrews the leading thought is *perseverance:* it is full of anxiety lest the readers should turn aside and fall away: the full assurance of hope is what is needed to keep them from being sluggish, and to make them followers of those who through faith and patience do already inherit the promises. We can regard a good many unsolved problems with equanimity if we can attain full assurance in these three senses—the full assurance of understanding that will comfort and strengthen us, the full assurance of faith that will keep us near the throne of grace, the full assurance of hope that will keep us in the path of quest till we reach our promised land. We need them all, and the last is not the least:

> When after all the strife and wearying
> We come in contact with the great true thing
> Which points the term of all,—will that be such
> As will make compensation over much
> For the long disillusions and sharp sting?
> Who knows? This only,—*its most distant touch*
> *Thrills our heart's instrument in every string.*[1]

[1] *Amiel's Journal*, 24.

[1] A. E. Waite, *Strange Houses of Sleep.*

SLOTH.

Heb. vi. 11, 12.—'We desire . . . that ye be not slothful.'

In the Westminster Shorter Catechism the question is asked: 'Are all sins equally heinous in the sight of God?' The answer is: 'Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.' This is in agreement with the general teaching of the Church. Certain sins have been held to be peculiarly offensive to God. In course of time their number was fixed as seven, and they were called 'the Seven Deadly Sins.' The Seven Deadly Sins are Pride, Avarice, Luxury, Envy, Gluttony, Anger, and Sloth.

Thus of the Seven Deadly Sins the seventh and last is Sloth. The name in Latin is *accidia* (as commonly spelt, but the correct form is *acedia*, which Chaucer turned into *accidie* in English; and under that name this sin is much discussed in Catholic books of devotion. For, although sloth is the best translation that has been found of *accidia*, sloth and *accidia* are not quite the same thing. *Accidia* is the spiritual form of sloth, but sloth is physical and mental as well as spiritual.

I.

1. Sloth is physical and mental. We may take the two forms together, for they are scarcely ever separable. There is a famous painting by Watts of sloth and its results, and sordid as the picture is, it is hard to say whether physical or mental indolence has most to do with it. It is a poorly furnished room, which yet exhibits traces of former abundance that redeem its squalidness. The secret of the change of circumstances in the household is revealed in the laziness and slovenliness of the mistress. Instead of diligently attending to her domestic affairs, she is absorbed in caressing a pet dove, and lounging on a bed, whose disordered clothes exhibit the careless house-keeping of many days. Her work-basket is overturned on the floor, and its contents are scattered. Doves make their nests in pigeon-holes above the bed, with all their litter of confusion, and from the open window the untended sprays of roses, returning to their wild condition through neglect, creep in. The housewife is young and beautiful; but whatever pleasing impression she produces is at once removed by the contradictory character of her slovenly habits. She cannot make a happy home; and therefore the door of the room on one side is represented as opening, admitting the sordid figure of Poverty, dressed in rags, and accompanied by the gaunt wolf of Hunger, and letting in at the same time the cold inclement wind outside, which blows before it a drift of withered autumn leaves that strew the floor, and speak eloquently of the hostile forces of nature which inevitably work havoc where there is no principle of order and industry to keep them in check; while through the wide-open window the winged Cupid, no longer a boy but a grown-up mature youth, is in the act of taking flight over the sill. Every detail of the picture tells, and enhances the effect of the whole; and no one can gaze upon the startling contrast between the dark forbidding figure of Poverty and the bright affrighted look of Love, without reading the moral which it so forcibly teaches.[1]

Sloth is temperamental and often hereditary. Mrs. Sellar, the wife of the Professor of Latin in the University of Edinburgh, in her *Recollections and Impressions*, says of her grandmother, 'I do not remember hearing of her personal qualities, except of the strong vein of laziness which often made her work a hole in her finger, to save her the trouble of picking up her thimble!' And then she adds 'This trait I recognize in myself, though from someone else I must have inherited the vitality which in me runs parallel with the laziness.' Mrs. Sellar's grandmother seems to have had a companion in Burne Jones, of whom Rossetti said humorously that he was the laziest man he knew, and, when called upon to explain this in the face of facts, answered unabashed, 'Well, when once you sit down to work you are too lazy even to get up again.[2]

More than that, sloth is racial. In a famous passage in his *History of the Jesuits in North America*, Francis Parkman says: 'The Indians melted away, not because civilization destroyed them, but because their own ferocity and intract-

[1] H. Macmillan, *G. F. Watts*, 214.
[2] *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, i. 217.

able indolence made it impossible that they should exist in its presence.'

Much Scottish humour turns on the supposition that indolence is inherent in the Scottish character—at least as seen in the Highlands. 'During the formation of one of the lines of railway through the Highlands,' says Sir Archibald Geikie, 'a man came to the contractor and asked for a job at the works, when the following conversation took place:

'Well, Donald, you've come for work, have you? and what can you do?'

'Deed, I can do onything.'

'Well, there's some spade and barrow work going on; you can begin on that.'

'Ach, but I wadna just like to be workin' wi' a spade and a wheelbarrow.'

'O, would you not? Then yonder's some rock that needs to be broken away. Can you wield a pick?'

'I wass never usin' a pick, whatefer.'

'Well, my man, I don't know anything I can give you to do.'

So Donald went away crestfallen. But being of an observing turn of mind, he walked along the rails, noting the work of each gang of labourers, until he came to a signal-box, wherein he saw a man seated, who came out now and then, waved a flag, and then resumed his seat. This appeared to Donald to be an occupation entirely after his own heart. He made enquiry of the man, ascertained his hours and his rate of pay, and returned to the contractor, who, when he saw him, good-naturedly asked:

'What, back again, Donald? Have you found out what you can do?'

''Deed I have, sir. I would just like to get auchteen shullin's a week, and to do that'—holding out his arm and gently waving the stick he had in his hand.'[1]

But the English are not allowed to escape. Dr. Burroughs, in *The Valley of Decision,* quotes from a private letter of 'a German intellectual,' written during the war: 'Our real danger has always been and always will be only in the West. But we shall be saved by the gigantic laziness of England and the nervous exhaustion which will come to France. . . . How often did I tell you in 1912, on my return from London, that England aspires to nothing but shorter hours of work, big salaries, football, and orange marmalade?'[1]

[1] *Scottish Reminiscences*, 24.

2. But however far-flung and however disastrous in its results, it is not physical or mental sloth that is reckoned by the Church one of the Deadly Sins; it is spiritual sloth. It is spiritual sloth that receives the name of *accidie*. And it deserves a name of its own. For if it is a form of sloth, it is more than that. It has many sides and defies definition. Says Cassian: 'Acedia' may be called a weariness or distress of heart; it is akin to sadness; the homeless and solitary hermits, those who live in the desert, are especially assailed by it, and monks find it most troublesome about twelve o'clock: so that some of the aged have held it to be 'the sickness that destroyeth in the noonday.'[2] More prosaically, Bishop Carpenter calls it 'the vice of slothful indifference, reluctance to put forth effort, the state of mind to which no stimulus of outward circumstance or of noble imagination seems to appeal.'[3] And a still more modern writer describes it as 'unconcern' or 'sulky and gloomy indolence,' the spirit of the expression, 'What's the good of it all?'[4] Mrs. Story relates in her *Reminiscences:* 'We were at Dalmeny on a Sunday, and in the course of his very excellent sermon the minister made use of the unusual word 'accidie,' which none of his hearers understood. It was under discussion at lunch, and still no light was thrown on the disputed word. After lunch an adjournment was made to the library, and some one suggested that the word had a sound as if it might have belonged to the Elizabethan age; researches were therefore made in several of the poetical works of that period, and the gentlemen of the party industriously consulted numerous volumes, Lord Rosebery in particular mounting a step-ladder, and looking carefully into the books arranged on some of the higher shelves. The word was finally traced and located in Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* and was found to mean a kind of inertness or condition of sloth, and as such it quite accorded with the subject of the minister's sermon, and everybody was satisfied.'

[1] E. A. Burroughs, *The Valley of Decision*, 113.
[2] F. Paget, *The Spirit of Discipline*, 8.
[3] W. B. Carpenter, *The Spiritual Message of Dante*, 148.
[4] H. B. Garrod, *Dante, Goethe's Faust*, 144.

We must not exaggerate the 'deadliness' of this sin. 'Physical conditions of temperament and constitution, of weakness, illness, weariness, overwork, may give at times to such a mood of mind and heart a strange power against us; at times the forces for resistance may seem frail and few. It is a truth which should make us endlessly charitable, endlessly forbearing and considerate and uncritical towards others; but surely it is a truth that we had better be shy of using for ourselves. It will do us no harm to over-estimate the degree in which our own gloom and sullenness are voluntary; it will do us very great harm to get into the way of exaggerating whatever there may be in them that is physical and involuntary.

At the same time the results even of physical sloth are sufficiently disastrous. 'Indeed,' says Dr. Stalker, 'I am inclined to think that there is no greater enemy of the Church than sloth. Persons keeping lodgers have often complained to me of the way in which, on the Lord's Day, all the arrangements of the household are thrown into confusion by those who are not only prevented by their own sloth from being in the house of God but prevent others also from attending who would like to be present. Yet the fault is not all on one side, for young men have complained to me that it was impossible for them to attend the Sabbath Morning Meeting because of the delay and lateness on Sabbath morning in their lodgings. Such malarrangements may appear to be trifles; but, if their effect be to stunt the growth of character at the critical stage, and thus to destroy the powers and influence of the whole subsequent life, it is manifest how serious they are. Nothing can be a trifle which interferes with the work of the Spirit of God.

I remember an intimate friend, when we were fellow-students together, after he had passed through a great spiritual crisis, saying to me, 'I have been perishing through sheer sloth.' What he meant was, that for years he had been quite well aware that it was his duty to be up and doing—acting on his convictions, confessing his Saviour, and taking his share in God's work—but that he had procrastinated owing to a kind of torpor and unwillingness to be bothered. Does not his confession sum up the real history of many a soul'? [1]

J. Stalker, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, 126.

II.

What is the Remedy? Perhaps there are more remedies than one. Let each seek out and use that which will be most effectual in his own case.

1. First of all there is Chaucer's Remedy: 'Against this horrible sin of accidie, and the branches of same, there is a virtue that is called fortitude or strength, that is, an affection through which a man despiseth obnoxious things. This virtue enhanceth and enforceth the soul, right as accidie abateth and maketh it feeble: for this fortitude may endure with long sufferance the travails that are convenable.' In modern English *let us try* to overcome it. Principal Rainy, his biographer tells us, 'always maintained that his besetting sin was *indolence*. One of his sons says that Dr. Rainy most obviously would have found it an easy thing, any morning after breakfast, to linger over the newspaper or take up some light reading, and that it was often with a visible effort of resolution he went off to the study.' 'But then,' he adds, '*he always went.*' It may be that in some cases sloth is never overcome, however keen the desire to overcome it. The most notable case is that of Francis Thompson, the poet. No one could have more passionately desired to rid himself of the habit of indolence. 'In the trembling hand of his last months he wrote out in big capitals on pages torn from exercise books such texts as were calculated to frighten him into his clothes. "Thou wilt not lie-abed when the last trump blows"; "Thy sleep with the worms will be long enough," and so on.' But it was all in vain. 'His,' says his biographer, 'was a long series of broken trysts.' [1] 'But, let those,' says Sir Edward Cook, 'who reproach themselves for a desultoriness, seemingly incurable, take heart again from the example of Florence Nightingale. No self-reproach recurs more often in her private outpourings at this time than that of *irregularity* and even *sloth*. She found it difficult to rise early in the morning; she prayed and wrestled to be delivered from desultory thoughts, from idle dreaming, from scrappiness in unselfish work. She wrestled, and she won.' [2]

2. But the remedy of remedies is the advent

[1] E. Meynell, *The Life of Francis Thompson*, 32.

[2] E. T. Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 40.

to the soul of the living Christ. The advent to each separate soul is when each one recognizes that he is an individualization of the Christ and that his bodily organs are the members of Christ. The soul to whom this truth comes is indeed born again, his centre of gravity is changed, he is born out of his old material self, he is the same man but wholly changed. The change is as great as that in Tennyson's description of the larva of the dragon-fly bursting its chrysalis.

> An inner impulse rent the veil
> Of his old husk. From head to tail
> Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.
> Through crofts and pastures wet with dew
> A living flash of light he flew.

The 'inner impulse' is the activity of the Christ within. The 'living flash of light' is the analogy of the startling change that comes over the whole mental attitude of the man who has recognized for the first time his inseverability from God.

And with this recognition comes an overwhelming sense of the responsibility of life, and the sin of shirking any of its duties. More than that, there comes the sense of power: 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' And with that the call to service. For after all it is through service that deliverance from accidie and every form of sloth most surely comes. And if ever there was a time when it was needful to preach the gospel of work, it is to-day. We are deluged with books about the miseries of existence and the rottenness of life. We are deluged with books in which it is asserted that we can never know anything about our origin or destiny. There is one reply to them all, and it has been given by Ella Wheeler Wilcox:—

> I know not whence I came,
> I know not whither I go,
> But the fact stands clear
> That I am here
> In this world of pleasure and woe;
> And out of the mist and murk
> Another truth shines plain—
> It is in my power,
> Each day and hour,
> To add to its joy or its pain.
>
> I know that the earth exists—
> It is none of my business why.
> I cannot find out
> What it's all about—
> I should but waste time to try.
> My life is a brief, brief thing,
> I am here for a little space;
> But while I stay
> I should like, if I may,
> To brighten and better the place.
>
> Cease wondering why you came;
> Cease looking for faults and flaws;
> Rise up to-day
> In your might and say,
> I am part of the first great Cause.
> However full the world,
> There is room for an earnest man;
> It had need of me,
> Or I would not be—
> I am here to strengthen the plan.

Surely.

Heb. vi. 14.—'Surely blessing I will bless thee.'

This word 'surely' has lost much of its force. When our Authorized Version was made it was a strong word—certainly, verily, assuredly. It is a strong word here—could not be stronger.

'When George says "Verily," there's no altering him,' so the neighbours were accustomed to tell one another about young George Fox, when he was a boy at home with his father in the Fen country.

So Carlyle loved Mohammed's way of writing in the *Koran,* as he often does, a sentence of a single word, leaving it there alone to heighten its emphasis—'Assuredly.'

But, in this world of contingencies and misadventures and unforeseen difficulties and dangers, it may be questioned whether anyone has the right to say 'Verily.' I have to safeguard my engagements and stipulations. *If the Lord will*—so I ought to put it—*I shall live, and do this or that.* God Himself is the one Person whose 'Verily' cannot be overturned, and whose 'surely' stands sure though the heavens should fall. They wax old as a garment; but He abides the same.

2. How eager He is to utter in my hearing the word that is so stable, a staff to lean upon through the longest day, a foundation to build upon which

no winds can shake or floods remove! I am not like Abraham, of imposing spiritual stature. 'I am not wise to know, nor sure of foot to go.' A thousand frailties beset me. Yet to me He says—nay, He swears by Himself—'Surely blessing I will bless thee.'

3. I would receive the message every new morning. Perhaps I rise with the conviction of sin lying on my conscience; and He bids me claim at once, and in its magnificent fullness, the pardon He provides in Jesus Christ His Son. Perhaps it is my impotence before temptation that dismays me; I fear that ere evening I shall succumb to the enemy; and He offers me the almightiness of the Holy Ghost. Perhaps the morning is dark with anxiety because one I love is in peril, or heavy with sorrow because a life dear as my own has been snatched away; and He comforts me with His own consolation and presence. 'I will bless you,' He asseverates, 'I Myself; what you cannot win, I will give you freely; surely, surely I will.'

4. And I would expand His promise over all the future; for, when He begins, who can predict when He will stay His hand? 'Blessing I will bless'; it is how He binds Himself to me *for a great while to come*. If I take from the good and the true and the just what Tennyson calls 'the charm For Ever,' they crumble into dust. But God writes 'For Ever' over each of His priceless gifts. His forgiveness is irrevocable. His strength and holiness and peace and victory are meant to deepen with the revolution of the seasons. Out of His heaven, when He leads me through its gates, I shall pass no more. One golden link is joined to another golden link, and the chain is endless.

I little see, I little know,
  Yet can I fear no ill;
He who hath guided me till now
  Will be my leader still.

No burden yet was on me laid
  Of trouble or of care,
But He my trembling step hath stayed,
  And given me strength to bear.

I came not hither of my will
  Or wisdom of mine own:
That Higher Power upholds me still,
  And still must bear me on.

I knew not of this wondrous earth,
  Nor dreamed what blessings lay
Beyond the gates of human birth
  To glad my future way.

And what beyond this life may be
  As little I divine,—
What love may wait to welcome me,
  What fellowships be mine.

I know not what beyond may lie,
  But look, in humble faith,
Into a larger life to die,
  And find new birth in death.

He will not leave my soul forlorn;
  I still must find Him true,
Whose mercies have been new each morn,
  And every evening new.

Upon His providence I lean,
  As lean in faith I must:
The lesson of my life hath been
  A heart of grateful trust.

And so my onward way I fare
  With happy heart and calm,
And mingle with my daily care
  The music of my psalm.[1]

Immortality.

Heb. vi. 18.—'By two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie.'

'Two immutable things'—the promise confirmed by an oath. What, then, does this mean to us? Shall we misinterpret the spirit of our text if we take it to signify that in Nature God has given us an intimation of immortality, and in redemption confirmed it by an oath? We hail a double rainbow; the promise in the constitution of things, and that promise made absolute in Christ.

1. Consider the *natural basis* of the great hope. Suggestions arising out of the depths of our nature cannot be lightly set aside, and in various ways such suggestions force themselves upon us. We do not know of a time when the doctrine of a future life was not held; and if any belief whatever is to be considered universal, it is this.

[1] F. L. Hosmer.

Sometimes a sanction for the doctrine is found in the structure of the mind. The invincible feeling that we are too big for this world, and never exhaust ourselves in a brief life, persuades many. The indestructibility of matter and mind is a theory that carries weight with others. Our delight in greatness and permanence is often urged as a token that death does not end all. Very varied are the arguments by which men express their impatience with temporal limitations; some of them, we are bound to say, are not specially convincing, yet it is significant that from so many points of view we get glimpses of a larger life.

Thinkers who most emphatically reject revelation nevertheless continue to construe hopefully the problem of the hereafter. 'To execute great things a man must live as though he had never to die,' was a maxim of Vauvenargues, and one, we are told, that gained the lively praise of Voltaire. Many workers of a sceptical temper who have done great things did reason thus. Approaching the problem from different points of view, they reached the same conclusion. A metaphysician like Montesquieu bears this witness: 'I know not how the atheists think, but, for myself, I would not exchange the idea of my immortality for the happiness of a day. I delight in believing that I am immortal as God Himself. Independently of revelation, metaphysics give me a very strong hope of my eternal happiness, which I would not willingly renounce.' We are not surprised that a religious painter like Sir Charles Eastlake should write: 'Beauty, in all its highest forms, is calculated to impress on human beings the belief in a perfection greater than this world contains'; but it is impressive to know that another æsthete and a doubter like Goethe should be so firmly persuaded of immortality: 'the philosopher does not need the countenance of religion to prove certain doctrines; as, for instance, eternal duration. Man should believe in immortality; he has a right to this belief; it corresponds with the wants of his nature, and he may believe in the promises of religion. To me, the eternal existence of my soul is proved from my idea of activity; if I work on incessantly till my death, Nature is bound to give me another form of existence when the present one can no longer sustain my spirit.' Balzac also was of opinion that practical life tends to produce this conviction, for he puts these words into the mouth of his *Country Doctor:* 'After I am gone, my work of civilization will continue. When you have set yourself to do anything, something within you urges you on, you see, and you cannot bear to leave it unfinished. The craving within us for order and perfection is one of the signs that point most surely to a future existence.' Any number of similar testimonies from the ranks of rationalism might be adduced. Men do not get rid of religious beliefs because they leave the Church and formally renounce its creed, nor altogether even when they lapse into a sensual life; in defiance of all, the deathless principle persists, makes its presence felt, its voice heard, its majesty acknowledged, where and when least expected.

2. If in Nature we have the promise of immortality, *in Christ that promise has been made absolute,* confirmed by an oath. The rainbow that spans the churchyard is not a lunar bow, faint and dubious, but clear, bold, intense, like unto an emerald. It is of the first importance that we bring every assumed truth to the test of Christ's teaching. St. John admonishes us to try the spirits by judging them in their relation to our Lord, and thus we must judge whatever doctrines and theories solicit our reliance. How, then, does this doctrine of human immortality look in the light of Christ, of His life, teaching, and work?

Our Lord Himself is the supreme argument for the doctrine. 'For verily not of angels doth he take hold, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren' (Heb. ii. 16, 17). He is the embodiment of the ideal humanity; what He is, it is in reality; humanity is that in the thought of God. Through passion, selfishness, and wilfulness, through grievous ill-treatment, the greatness of humanity had become obscured; the image of God was not effaced, yet sadly defaced; being made subject to vanity, a lofty destiny no longer seemed possible for it. But in the Incarnation its essential grandeur was reasserted, its blemishes cleansed, its Divine strength and beauty manifested, and its claim to glory, honour, and immortality finally vindicated. We can now no more think of man as a temporal manifestation than we can think of Christ as such; and how impossible to think that of Him! 'The

Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory,' and in that sublime event we are assured of our Divine lineage, immense capacity, and enduring inheritance. It is the accepted rule to judge of the nature and worth of things as seen in their highest embodiment, and we justly estimate human nature as revealed in our Lord. When this is done, how unthinkable it becomes that we are exhausted in this fugitive life! 'The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom. vi. 23). He is the proof supreme and pledge of immortality.

When Socrates came to die he said to his disciples: 'I have faith in the future, and I think I see the golden islands, but oh that we had a stouter vessel, or a stronger word!' That has been declared to be the most pathetic cry of antiquity. Oh that we had a safer vessel! Oh that we had a stronger word! The great thinker had a misty vision. He said it was a great venture to set forth on such a sea on such a frail raft. The cry of Socrates has been answered for us. 'Oh that we had a safer vessel!'—in Jesus Christ the frail raft was turned into a strong ark that shall not make shipwreck. 'Oh,' says Socrates, 'that we had a stronger word!' We have got it! 'I am the living God,' 'I was dead, and I am alive,' I have the keys of death,' 'if it were not so, I would have told you'—there is the stronger word for which Socrates sighed.

An Anchor.

Heb. vi. 19.—'Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul.'

THERE are three things at least which are assumed or declared in these words.

1. First, it is assumed that *the human soul is in need of something to serve as anchor.* There is no need to argue such a point. What is all great literature but simply the chart of the sea of human life marked with the rocks and shoals and quicksands which threaten the soul of man? And great literature is just our own experience strongly perceived and cast upon a screen. Every great drama, every great tragedy, is our own drama and our own tragedy. Which in the long run is the greater danger besetting us—that we rush upon some rock and split, or that we simply go on drifting? We are in the habit of supposing that the more serious danger is lest we be driven by some gust of passion to commit some definite sin and make some breach into forbidden things. Most of our warnings, therefore, have in view some overt, nameable transgression. And yet, though that is the popular view, it was not the view taken by our Lord; nor is it the view which we should take if we made clear to ourselves how things work in the region of character. In our Lord's view, the gravest danger in life is not that we rush upon some rock and go down: the gravest danger is simply that we drift.

'Men need not be at pains to go to hell,' warns old Bishop Wilson; 'if they don't exert themselves they will land there as a matter of course.'

We blame ourselves for our actions more than for the general spirit of our life, and yet it is from the general spirit of our life that our actions proceed. To fall we think a graver thing than to drift; and yet it could be demonstrated that no one in this world ever fell unless there had gone on previously a secret process of drifting and trifling and carelessness.

Another thing which makes the condition of drifting the truly serious condition is, that the signs are, to begin with, very obscure and personal. They are so obscure to ourselves even, that if we wish to deceive ourselves we may. When we seem to ourselves to have lost ground in one direction, we can easily gather what seems to us evidence that in other directions we have made progress.

Yet everyone who is not deceiving himself knows that it is the nature of the soul to drift, as it is the nature of a stone to fall or water to run down. And if that be so, the one thing which the soul needs is something which will serve as an anchor.

2. The second thing which this verse of Scripture declares is, that anything which shall serve as *an anchor* for the soul *must lie in front.* That surely is a very profound insight: that such a being as man is can be held honourably only by something that lies ahead of him. When we try to secure a life by something in the region of its own past, we run the risk of hardening that life and shutting it out from certain possibilities of variety and growth. We know how it limits a life

to dwell too exclusively upon its own past achievements. It is a tendency within ourselves which we ought to regard with real misgiving—to solace or justify ourselves for some want of achievement to-day by reckoning up achievements in the same region in days gone by.

There is nothing that unifies and consecrates a life like some strongly held hope. We shall help those who are dear to us and whose lives we are seeking to form, not by rebuking them exclusively for past failures, but rather by quickening their ambition, helping them to believe in themselves, speaking of life as opportunity, and in all and through all assuring them of the correspondence of God's Spirit with their own personal efforts. If one may even venture—and this with the utmost reticence—upon a very urgent subject, surely the most beautiful, as it is the most effective, way to kindle in young lives a passion for purity and chastity is, not so much to speak of the shame and the wrong of the lower life, but rather to lift up their eyes to look forward to a time when, if God so wills it, they will be asked to consecrate those elementary functions of life in some pure love which shall be for richer or for poorer, for better or for worse, in sickness or in health, until God shall separate the two by death.

But in every region of our life it might be maintained that the sense of hope, the sense of a happy outlet, is the one thing that can cleanse and move and sustain our life, just as every yielding to lower things might be shown to be the influence of a temporary despair.

¶ Sometimes in a very difficult place, in working against the wind round a headland, it is found necessary to run the anchor out and drop it, and then work on the cable, swing round a difficult point, and come to a place of safety. I remember once, in the far north, in Ontario, seeing this beautifully illustrated in a lumber raft. The wind had died down, and there was no possibility of moving the big raft except by the cable, and so the anchor was taken away out in a little boat and dropped in the lake, and then the raft was pulled up to the anchor.[1]

3. The third thing that one perceives in this same verse is, that the *'anchor of the soul' is conceived to be loyalty to the Person of Jesus Christ.* Short of this highest loyalty, we know that a true loyalty of any kind steadies and sustains our souls. Nay, we do wrongly, and put an honour upon Christ which He Himself does not desire, when we separate the beautiful human loyalties that are so much of life from the great loyalty to Christ which is their consecration and their crown. This spirit of loyalty is the greatest thing the soul has known. It is the Eternal Spirit that informs the whole fabric of things. The loyalty of homes, of families, of nations, the loyalty of lovers, the loyalty of believers—without these things life would fall back into dust and ashes.

Loyalty is the fulfilment of the Law. We know how it might be possible for us to obey a thousand commandments and yet in secret be unfaithful to the Spirit behind them all; and, on the other hand, we know how, if we are loyal to the great Spirit which speaks in Law, we cannot, without discord in our own lives, be unfaithful to the least of His commandments. A child who has left home to meet the world might conceivably be obedient to many a spoken injunction of his parents, and yet might transgress on some matter about which they had not spoken. But the child who keeps love in his heart—no matter into what circumstances he may be plunged—will never be at a loss to know how they would have him act in any moral crisis.

[1] Ralph Connor, *Christian Hope*, 13.

Hope.

Heb. vi. 19.—'Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul.'

Hope, with uplifted foot set free from earth,
Pants for the place of her ethereal birth,
On steady wings sails through th' immense abyss,
Plucks amaranthine joys from bowers of bliss,
And crowns the soul, while yet a mourner here,
With wreaths like those triumphant spirits wear.
Hope, as an anchor firm and sure, holds fast
The Christian vessel, and defies the blast.[1]

The three Christian graces are very closely connected—faith, hope, and charity. Faith belongs more to the intellect; hope more to the will; and love to the affection. Faith is the intellectual vision of the spiritual and eternal world, hope is the effort of will to lay hold of the things revealed

[1] Cowper.

by faith, and love is the glow of desire for these same things which set hope in motion. It is hope, the middle one of the three Christian virtues, that we are now to consider. Take four points: (1) the hope of temperament; (2) the hope of sentiment; (3) the hope of time; and (4) the hope of eternity.

1. Hope is with many people a matter of temperament. They have the temperament which is called sanguine, and which is attributed to a certain fullness of the blood, and is often associated with light hair and a florid complexion. Certainly there are some people who naturally look at the sunny side of things—who are always anticipating good, not evil. The opposite temperament is the melancholic, which is associated frequently with dark hair and a sallow complexion. It anticipates evil, sees the seamy side of things, is always expecting misfortune. Someone has wittily said, if two men touch a bee, one gets honey and the other gets stung; if two men touch a bush, one gathers a rose and the other is jagged by a thorn; if two men are looking at one quarter of the sky, one of them sees only the dark cloud and the other sees only the silver lining. There are these differences among men. Undoubtedly it is a precious heritage to be born with a hopeful temperament. That man who, when it is midnight, does not think of midnight but of morning, and when it is the middle of winter thinks not of snow and ice but of the coming spring and summer, is a wise man. And, in nine cases out of ten, events justify his expectation, for the wheel of fortune comes round, and the part of it which is now at the bottom will in half a revolution be at the top. The tide of opportunity rises, some time or other, to the feet of every man; and he who is of a hopeful disposition is the most likely to take advantage of it.

Temperament accounts for the hope of many people, but hope may have a higher origin, namely principle, and that is far better. This is the characteristic of Christian hope. It is not dependent on a sunny temperament, and it may be possessed by those who are naturally most melancholic, because it is derived not from themselves but from another.

2. In most of us, pessimism is only a mood, to be blown away with the zephyrs of enjoyment or the sturdy blast of action. But sometimes in men's minds it condenses and hardens into a doctrine and a creed. There is a philosophic pessimism which teaches that this is the worst conceivable world, that the balance of evil over good is excessive, and so hopeless that the logical end of the world would be a simultaneous act of suicide on the part of all mankind. You would naturally suppose that such sentiments have nothing to do with religion—and it is quite true that philosophic pessimists as a rule have no belief in an overruling Providence—but it is a strange fact that one of the most widespread religions in the world is clearly pessimistic in its spirit. Buddhism looks upon existence as an evil in itself, and so great an evil that its ideal is the extinction of personal existence through reabsorption into the great impersonal All, out of which personal life has been developed.

It is often said that Christianity is optimistic, and that is true; but it might also with truth be called pessimistic. It does not believe that there is any necessary law of amelioration in the structure of earthly things. It looks upon man as fallen, and incapable of achieving his own hopes. If left to himself, man would get worse instead of better. But from this pessimism Christianity rises to optimism, because, despairing of man, it casts itself on God; and it clings to Him all the more closely because it feels how deep is the gulf into which, without Him, it would tumble.

3. In what has already been said, we have been led to the conclusion that the hope of man is not in, but outside of, himself. It is not subjective, but objective. Of course, as a mere feeling it is subjective, but the object to which it clings is not evolved from man's own interior, but is presented from without. It is let down from above, and it is by clinging to that object that man really hopes. One of the classical authors says, ' Hope is pursued by fear,' and that is profoundly true as long as hope is merely the hope of temperament or of sentiment, but is quite different when it is hope derived from an object supplied by God. The object of hope is supplied in the Scriptures, and that leads St. Paul to say that through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures we have hope. God Himself, in fact, is the object and inspirer of hope, and therefore again and again in the Bible He is

called 'the God of hope.' Christ also is called 'our hope,' and St. Paul says, beautifully, 'Christ in you the hope of glory.' These quotations are sufficient to show whence hope is derived, and wherein consists its stability in our breast. The emotion rises and falls according to our moods, but the object of hope is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and the more we recur to it, the more do all doubts and fears disappear.

(1) Whether the future we are thinking of is our own individual future or the future of the world, it is equally true that Christ is our hope. Take first our individual future. If we are thinking of this as in our hands or in the hands of other human beings, how uncertain it must be, for none of us can tell what it may bring forth; but if it has been given out of our hands into God's, how safe it is! He will certainly complete his own work. As the arc of a circle, however fragmentary, inevitably carries the mind to the realization of the perfect round, so the work of Christ, even in its minutest beginnings, carries in its bosom the promise and the potency of its perfection. Our feeling of failure must be most painful when we think of our life as our own work, but we have only to think of it as God's workmanship, in order to lose our despair and to have hope revived in our breast.

(2) It is the very same with the future of the world. If we think of the position and prospects of the world as dependent on man, and to some extent on ourselves, we may naturally be discouraged and despairing; but if we remember that Jesus Christ has entered into history, and that now He is the Lord of events and is guiding them all to an issue predestined by Himself, then our hopelessness disappears, and hope returns. Even our own little contribution is taken up into that whole, and glorified. So is the contribution of our Church and of our age. In itself it may be nothing, or next to nothing; but it becomes a little arc in the great circle of God's design and Christ's achievements. Think what an influence Christianity has in extending the conception of time in men's minds. A Christian man, even the humblest, thinks not only of what he is doing at the present time, but of what that which he is doing will be a hundred or even a thousand years hence.

4. While Christ is our hope, there is one event in the life of Christ with which, in the Bible, Christian hope is peculiarly associated—that is, the Resurrection. The Scripture says that God 'hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' How is the vitality of hope affected by the resurrection of Christ? In this way: the resurrection of Jesus is the most authentic glimpse humanity has ever had into the world to come. The belief in immortality is innate in man, so much so that even Cicero and Seneca contend for its reality on account of its universality, and Socrates and Plato have worked out profound arguments in support of the doctrine. Immortality is a beautiful belief; it is always clung to most by the finest natures; but in all ages men and women, while clinging to it, have had a cold doubt arising from the fact that no one ever comes back. Oh! why do these adamantine gates never open from the other side? Why does no one, representative of all who are on the other side, come back to assure us that there is an existence out there, and a heavenly Father waiting for us?

In every age that has been the passionate demand of the human heart, and it has been met by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. He is the representative man, the representative of all the dead, who has forced His way back to give us assurance, and by many infallible proofs mankind is now assured of His resurrection. But the resurrection of Jesus is only the claw of the prehistoric specimen from which the skill of the naturalist constructs the whole animal. If it is true, ever so much more must be true. If it is true, then the future life in all its great features is assured, and hope can go forth and lay hold of it. In Scripture Christian hope is often called by such names as the 'hope of eternal life,' or 'hope laid up for you in heaven,' and St. Peter, who has sometimes been called the apostle of hope, as St. Paul is the apostle of faith, and St. John of love, speaks of an 'inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away' as the supreme object of hope.

There can be no doubt that, while this is not the exclusive, it is the supreme object of hope, and it was this new hope that roused the world and made Christianity the religion of the world. In those days the early Christians believed in the

other world with such a force of conviction that they neglected their homes and their business in order to brood on it, until St. Paul and other Christian teachers had to limit their attention to this subject. In those times, in the hope of getting more quickly to the world beyond, they not only faced persecution and martyrdom, but courted them, until Christian teachers had to warn them of the sin of such conduct. The world is very different now. No fear of our thinking too much of these things! No Christian teacher now needs to warn people against setting their affections too much on things above. It is this world that is now too much with us, and that world that is dim and shadowy. Some time, when persecution has to be endured by the Church again, the pristine freshness and force of Christian hope will come back.

¶ Passing through Cleveland, I came upon a thing that gave me a great shock of surprise. They have a great war monument there. I passed through it, and looked round the various sides, came out to the farther side, and turned round and looked back. I saw the figure of the great Lincoln striking at the fetters of a poor slave who held his hands up to him. Magnificently done, it just threw upon my heart with terrific force the whole weight of that struggle of the black man, and how the heart of Lincoln could not be turned aside, and how he risked his very nation for the fulfilment of that hope. The black man was groping upwards with the kind of sense that he was meant for better things, that God did not mean him to be a slave, that God did not mean him to lie down under the tyranny of custom and circumstance. It was the angel in him struggling for escape from the dead grip of the marble. [1]

The Veil.

Heb. vi. 19.—'Within the veil.

THE veil was a thickly woven and magnificent piece of tapestry, let down between the inner and the outer chambers of the Tabernacle. It was impervious to all eyes, and inaccessible to all persons save once a year, when the high priest, on the great Day of Atonement, passed within its guarded secrecy with the blood shed for the sins of the people.

[1] Ralph Connor, *Christian Hope*, 22.

Outside of this veil were placed the altar of incense, the golden candlestick, and the table of shewbread—furniture all emblematic of the people's worship. Within the veil, in what was called the Holy of Holies or 'the holiest of all,' were the ark of the covenant, and the mercy-seat overshadowed by the cherubim of glory. And here upon the mercy-seat, itself resting on the ark of the covenant, the invisible Jehovah, the God of Israel, not now as their dread theocratic King girt with the thunders of the Decalogue, but as the God of mercy, 'forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,' manifested Himself in a visible symbol to the ministering high priest. The Shekinah-glory, the 'cloudy splendour' in which Jehovah dwelt and out of which He revealed His covenanted presence, explained, as it constituted, the special sanctity of the symbolism within the veil.

It was between these two compartments of the Tabernacle—the one representing the Church in her earthly life, and the other the Church in her life with God in heaven—that the veil was hung: 'The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest,' except by a figure. In passing within the veil, the Jewish high priest entered into the immediate presence of God. He met Jehovah face to face in the cloud of glory.

Now, taking the broad meaning of the words, we may perceive the veil of a threefold mystery surrounding the Christian life. There is a veil over the spiritual world; over the Divine discipline of life; and over the heaven of the future.

1. *There is a veil over the spiritual world.*—By the spiritual world is meant all the unseen realities which surround us now. And it is not necessary to say much to prove that because that world is veiled it is difficult to maintain a Christian life, faithful unto death. From that spiritual region the Christian draws his inspiration, and from it proceed the laws of his life. To him the unseen kingdom of the present God and the living Christ—the kingdom of eternal truth and love, of saints and angels—is a reality, compared with which the material world is unreal, shadowy, and transient. The Divine life commences with the opening of the spirit's eye on the invisible. The awakening soul discerns a ladder between heaven

and earth on which the angels come and go. Or, to use the profound language of the Apostle Paul, he is 'in Christ a new creature'; *therefore,* 'old things, have passed away, and all things have become new.' The test by which we can estimate a man's progress in spiritual life is the extent to which he measures the visible by the laws of the unseen. He who is in the highest sense spiritual, feels the world to be a Divine temple, because he realizes God in it—His infinite presence shining from the deep sky above, and His love revealed in every flower. To him Christ is everywhere, hallowing, as of old, the relationships of life, and colouring by His sympathy its struggles and its sorrows. He can reverence men, not because they are rich or successful or powerful, but because they are living and immortal spirits; and his standard of life is not the expedient or the pleasurable or the popular: it is righteousness and truth and the love of the eternal world. Still, that world is veiled: only the eye of a strong faith can see its beauty. We are so encircled and enchained by the fleshy and material that we can clearly realize the eternal only in moments of meditation or prayer; while the transient presses incessantly upon us and by its strong glare absorbs us, and passion, with its coloured light, blinds the vision of the soul. Is it not evident, then, that to be faithful to the end demands a hope that enters within the folded veil which hides from us the spiritual world? Is it easy to feel God ever near, to live as in the presence of Christ, to realize in our daily contact with men the dignity of the immortal nature for which Christ died, to measure present temptations and allurements by the laws of everlasting right? Are there no moments when 'the eye of faith is dim,' and when it is hard to believe in the existence of a spiritual world at all? What can hold us fast *then,* but the hope that we shall one day pass from this region of delusions, and, no longer looking through the darkened windows of sense, behold the unclouded beauty of eternal realities, and 'know even as we are known'? 'Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.'

2. *There is a veil over the discipline of life.*—Indeed, the meaning of human life generally is profoundly veiled. Look at the myriads of our sinning, suffering, toiling brethren, oppressed, as thousands of them are, by the selfishness of their fellows, bearing the burden of sins they have not wrought or sorrows they have not created, and sinking by multitudes into the night of moral corruption, without one ray of God's gospel to lighten the gloom! Ask what all that means. And if we had no 'hope entering within the veil,' on the strength of which we could trust in the Fatherhood of God, and believe that in His good time we shall understand the mystery, and be able to trace the eternal rectitude amid the conflict of appearances, should we not be tempted to cry with the doubting psalmist, 'Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?'

(1) The majority of Christian men have at times been placed in circumstances of almost awful perplexity, when they have not dared to choose a path of action for themselves, and yet when God's path was hidden—times of that most terrible of conflicts, the conflict of duty clashing with duty: times when, if ever in their lives, a strong faith was needed, and yet, when, amid the storm of the struggle, all faith seemed to be crushed out, and trust turned to despair. Was there no veil there?

(2) Or look at the darkness which surrounds all spiritual labour. Here we have often to sow in tears while the reaping is veiled, just as in the natural world we cast the seed into the ground in utter ignorance of the manner in which it will be quickened into life. The sowing is seen, the reaping may be believed in, but the connexion between the two is concealed. The sower must trust to the dark laws of nature. He cannot see the marvellous forces that cause the seed to germinate; the mysterious influences of winter snows and summer rains; the silent electric currents by which the sowing is linked to the harvest that will wave in golden glory beneath the autumnal sky. So in spiritual life. We have to live for eternity. We have to work in faith. We feel the effort, realize the duty, see the thing to be done, but the laws which cause our toil to bear fruit are as hidden and mysterious as the laws of natural life. And it is this sense of darkness that saddens us; we are constantly prone to measure spiritual processes by visible results, forgetting that their connexion is often veiled. We think we can understand the soul. We think we can gauge the results

of spiritual effort; and because we toil on and see no effect, or look back and can detect no growth, we are saddened.

(3) Sometimes we have to wrestle with a sharp temptation, and all we can do is to keep true. Sometimes great darkness beclouds our faith, and the utmost effort is needed to believe at all, and we think we are going back. We fail to see that the earnest struggle and the wrestling faith will add a new glory to the crown; we fail to believe in the 'far off interest of our tears.' It is just this ignorance which gives rise to weariness. We might as well fancy that because we do not see the grain in the green blade that shoots up amid the snow—because we cannot trace the germinating process—there is no growth. We are like children who think the thunder terrible, but have no fear of the still blue flash that rends the forest; or like men who fancy the roaring hurricane may be powerful, while the quiet spring-time is powerless. If, then, we could not rest on a hope which enters within the veil, and in its strength believe in the certainty of the harvest, how could we be steadfast to the end?

(4) There is, too, the perpetual mystery of sorrow. The brightest hopes are often the first to fade. The beautiful decays the soonest. Our purest friendships are rent by death. Our highest efforts seem to be the most palpable failures. Is there no veil there? Who that has known deep sorrow has not also known that, when God's 'waves and His billows have gone over him,' *then* was the hour when he was most strongly tempted to doubt God altogether, and he has 'groaned, being burdened.'

Oh, the mystery of life! How often do the questions it suggests break in upon us, and we can find no answer; when our very insignificance seems to crush us; when we ask ourselves, What is our little life in the midst of the infinite universe whose laws seem so unalterable, whose order is so grand and calm, and whose forces are so irresistible? What is man whose life is but a span, and who is crushed before the moth? Suppose we had no hope, strong and active, amid all this mystery which reached within the veil—suppose this life were all—suppose the true and the false life ended alike in darkness—suppose we felt that a grim stillness awaited the close of a soul's life-long endeavour to get nearer to God, who could hold on to the end?

> Oh life as futile, then, as frail!
> Oh for a voice to soothe and bless!
> What hope of answer or redress?
> Behind the veil, behind the veil.

3. *There is a veil over the heaven of the future.*—There is a veil over its employments, relationships, locality—which we long how earnestly to pierce! Who has not almost prayed in the words of the poet—

> Ah! Christ, that it were possible
> For one short hour to see
> The souls we loved, that they might tell us
> What and where they be?

But here a great problem meets us. Taking the Scripture teaching that this life is the germ of the future life; that its present discipline is but the prelude to that 'exceeding weight of glory'; that this is but the bud of which the future life will be the flower, how is this earthly life to develop into the blessed life of heaven? Here we have no certain measure of spiritual progress. A man may have worked for God with heart and soul for years, and yet seem to see nothing accomplished. So with the growth of Christian character. A man may have lived most earnestly for years, and yet find a cold gloom of doubt settling over him, paralysing his powers, although he could almost pray for terrors to startle him into energy. Is it easy to believe in the attainment of the blessed life *then*? Moreover, our individual Christian life is a new and untried thing. No record of human experience, no spiritual chart, can help us. We must live alone in such hours—alone with God—and our own souls must fight out the battle. Then, too, difficulties increase with progress. The greatest and holiest purposes ever seem the most unfinished. The higher we rise the higher becomes our ideal, the keener our perception of aspirations unfulfilled and purposes unaccomplished, and the deeper our sense of the evil that *will* cling to us. The truest servants of God come to their life's end with the one common confession, that they have achieved but a fragment of their aims. Thus in our thoughtful hours the question forces itself upon us—How can we ever be fit for the great life to come? How

can such creatures of weakness, so prone to temptation, so broken with conflict, so conscious of defilement, ever become prepared for the fellowships of heaven?

But here comes in the hope which 'entereth within the veil.' Just as in the natural world the inscrutable activities which darken the seed-time, and create the fear of the seed's failure, do yet mature its fruitage; so in spiritual life, the Divine law of growth is at work, though it may be hidden from us. Our life here *must* be imperfect, because we live for eternity, and God is causing our life and work to move on an eternal scale. We, in this 'time world,' see but the minute commencement of that which reaches on into the everlasting. Every true effort must have its completion. Do you think that spiritual purposes and aspirations die because they are not fulfilled here? No! God knows our life with all its efforts and failures. He will one day unfold the secret records of the soul, and its purposes shall be carried out in grander tasks and with nobler fulfilment amid 'the song of Moses and the Lamb.'

What here is faithfully begun
Shall be completed, not undone.

The Forerunner.

Heb. vi. 20.—'Whither the forerunner is for us entered.'

READ the whole passage. How beautiful the words are. But if we escape from the spell which they lay upon us, and seek to find in them one consistent picture, we are bewildered. Refuge, hope, anchor, veil, forerunner, priest—how may we reconcile metaphors so divergent? It may be suggested that the key is the word 'forerunner,' and that if we explore its meaning, the passage will assume for us a new splendour.

The word may be used of the first green shoot, of the first flower that breaks through the soil in spring-time, of the first tree that bursts into leaf, a glad and joyous forerunner. This meaning gives us no help, and we pass to another, a military usage. For the scouts and especially the horsemen of an army were often called by this distinctive word 'forerunners.' A special corps of the ancient Macedonian army bore this noble title of honour. They were the 'shock troops' of their day, who stormed a strong point and held it till their comrades came up. It is with reluctance we turn from that meaning, for what a glorious picture it would furnish of Him who has been our Forerunner in the battle against sin, and who calls us to the vantage ground He has already won.

There is, however, a third meaning, and now we have found our key. For there was in the harbour of Alexandria a light vessel named the 'forerunner.' Its special task was to lead the great heavily-laden grain fleets of Egypt, upon the safe arrival of which Rome and Italy depended for their existence. When the sudden turbulent storms swept the Mediterranean, the grain fleets must seek some island harbour with a sheltered anchorage; and it was the function of the light craft named the forerunner to dash forward, take the soundings, and mark the anchorage where the great vessels might ride securely. Over these harbours often hung the clinging veil of the sea mist, into which none but a craft of light burthen dare venture. Now if we read again our passage of Hebrews in the light of these facts, we shall see how, one after another, the seemingly incongruous metaphors drop into place, yielding a clear and coherent picture.

Remember, further, the ancient and persistent tradition that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written at Alexandria or by a native of Alexandria, and the coincidence of the light craft in the great seaport becomes full of significance. Let us not forget that the picture of the stormy sea and the anchorage and the forerunner is but the Sacrament, as it were, of the inner spiritual experience to be appropriated by our storm-driven souls. Rest in Christ is our sorest need. Our hearts are so full of questioning in these strange days. We ask in the words of one of our soldier poets:

What is the secret—the secret
That lies at the heart of it all—
The surge of the stars, the cry of the wind,
And the beat of the sea,
And the surge, and the cry, and the beat of the soul in me?

When faith holds fast to Christ, these questionings cease to dismay us. As a refuge from every passing storm, He has prepared for us a haven and an anchorage. And for the last tempest of all is the harbour whose security and peace no storms of strife and sin shall vex. Very precious to the Forerunner are the lives now voyaging on

the great waters. We are not drifting at the mercy of wind and wave. Our track is to the harbour. In some deep sense we are already at anchor within the veil, since no storm can rob us of that which our Saviour has made ready for us. 'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also.'[1]

Christian Dynamics.

Heb. vii. 16.—'The power of an endless life.'

No word is more characteristic of the New Testament than this word—Power. It is the word in Greek from which we get our modern words 'dynamic' and 'dynamo.' They said of Jesus, that His word was with power. It was a dynamic word. 'To them gave he power' was also said of Him. 'That the dynamic of Christ may rest upon them,' prays the Apostle Paul.

It is this power which we all want. And what is it? It will not be enough to say that it is the feeling of our life being endless, the feeling of immortality. With many, perhaps with most of us, the feeling of immortality is but a floating sentiment—a vague, transient flash of occasional thought. The life which still goes on, which does not come to an end, this we accept as a doctrine, and should not like to part with it. But it is not a *power*. The fellowship of our soul with God will be to us, when we have it, and know that we have it, the power of an endless life. That is the first point. The fellowship of our soul with God comes to us through Christ. That is the second point.

1. Turn to the patriarchs. The patriarchs *believed God*. Their life was hidden in God. In that quietness and in that confidence was their *strength*. It was the *power* of the endless life. Apart from belief in God that life of theirs could be nothing to them but a bewildering mystery; it could give no clue to its own meaning. But the last of the three greatest of those patriarchs speaks some words at the very end of his life—as it seems, indeed, its very latest day—words which have come down to us in the forty-ninth chapter of the Book of Genesis. He gathers his sons together, and says words to them—reproving words, some of them; others, words of commendation; all of them words of prophecy. In the midst of these words, with an abrupt solemnity not proceeding from that which had been said, or bearing on that which was to be said, there breaks forth an inspiration. We seem to look upon the dying patriarch suddenly interrupting himself, as though in answer to a voice from God in his soul, falling back upon his pillows, lifting up his eyes to heaven, and saying, 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.' Does Jacob seem to say, 'I have waited vainly'? We understand Jacob to be hanging upon God at that moment, and though when his words were ended he would gather up his feet into the bed and yield up the ghost, we understand that at this moment there was at work within him the power of the endless life.

Would the patriarchs have gone on living that tent-life of theirs, strangers in a strange land, no harmony or concord between them and the things around, if their soul had not been linked with the eternal God, and the strength of His sustaining might had not gone forth upon them? If after some most humble manner we hope that we may say, as St. John said, 'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,' then to us the power of the endless life waits for no future: we have it.

2. But with the naming of that Name there comes in here our second point. This fellowship of our soul with the Father, which is the power of the endless life, comes to us only through Jesus Christ. The full sentence of which those words, 'the power of the endless life,' are a part, is this: 'After the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.' There is the figure of the living priest. Whence comes he? and whither goes he? Who gave him the priesthood? and who is to take it when he dies? There is no answer. This man is like unto the Son of God—an image of Him, as though by a parable. This is the meaning of all the strange words about Melchizedek; and so the Son of God has His priesthood, not by any law of a carnal commandment—not, that is, by any provision which is temporary—but by and with the eternity of life which is His own. And because this life continueth ever, the priesthood also

[1] W. H. Leathem, in *Life and Work*, xl. [Dec. 1918] 177.

which belongs to it continueth ever: it is unchangeable; it cannot pass to another. And so, leaving Melchizedek, our thought fixes on Him. The eternal priesthood of Christ is to us the power of the endless life. He offers the eternal sacrifice. The giving of Himself for man is the imperishable fact through which there comes back to man the forfeited gift of life, even that fellowship of being with the Father which alone is life, lost to us through our sin, recovered to us through the Priest for ever, who has put away sin.

The power of Christ's endless life does more than communicate the hope of it to others, it gives the possession. When the original well of life had been tainted and poisoned by sin, He came to open up a new and pure fountain. All the figures of the water of life proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb, of the tree of life, of the bread of life, are presented to us in truths which reveal themselves to our souls when we come to the history and work of Jesus Christ. He secures for us a pardon consistent with righteousness, without which it could have brought no real life. He begins a new life in the soul, which has hard and manifold struggles with the fierce reluctances of the old nature. He encourages, strengthens, renews it, and at last makes it victorious. All this He does, not merely by presenting knowledge—'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent'—but by an act of creation through the Holy Spirit. He gives, not the perception or hope, but the possession of it. 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.'

The great word which Advent sounds in our ear is *life*. The name by which the Son of God, whose coming to this world Advent proclaims each year in louder and louder tones—the name by which He is named among men is 'the Life.' 'I am the Life,' He says Himself. 'For the life was manifested,' says the Apostle John, 'and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.' And for what purpose manifested? Just that it might be ours also, and the power of it upon us always; and not in some unknown hazy future of ages and conditions after death, but *now*.

This is the central strength subsisting at the heart of endless weakness.

We learn but what we live: we teach
But what in us is life from Thee.
Oh, by Thy timeless love's out-reach
In us, in us re-uttered be
That un-begun, unseen, unheard,
Unended Passion of the Word.

The Saviour's Ability.

Heb. vii. 25.—'He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.'

According to this chapter there are two results that follow from the displacement of the Levitical priesthood by the priesthood of Christ. The first of these is, that we are enabled to draw near to God by an effectual purging of the conscience from sin, which the blood of bulls and goats could not accomplish. And the second is, that complete salvation is secured to those who so draw near. It is the second result that is stated in the text. 'Wherefore,' that is, because Christ ever liveth to make intercession for us, 'he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.'

While Private Darby, a confederate soldier, was lying on the battlefield at Sharpsburg, he handed his Bible to a tall man who came along, and asked him to please send it to his mother, whose address he would find on the fly-leaf. 'No,' said the tall man, 'my dear boy, we will nurse you into health, and you shall take the Bible to your mother yourself.' That tall man was Abraham Lincoln, who had the authority to order others to give the best attention to the wounded soldier, and in due time the lad was well enough to travel home. Private Darby had given himself up to die, but Abraham Lincoln secured his recovery. And every sinner who gives himself up to die may be cured by the Great Physician if he is willing to commit his case completely into His hands. Sin has many phases, but no phase of it can prevail against the ability of Christ, if the sinner is willing that this ability should be exercised in God's way.[1]

The ability of Christ to save is considered in two different aspects: its range, and its efficacy.

1. *Its Range.*—It extends to all those who come to God by Him. For though the word 'all' does not occur in the passage, it is of course implied.

[1] A. C. Dixon, *Through Night to Morning*, 69.

The phrase is precisely analogous to our Lord's own words: 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,' which is equivalent to saying, 'Everyone that cometh to Me shall certainly be received.' Christ's power to save, then, embraces all who come to God by Him. No doubt He has power to save even those who neglect or refuse to come. But this thought is not present to the mind of the writer, who is contemplating the completeness of the salvation provided for those who come to God to obtain it, not the possibilities that are open to those who do not. What He assures us of is this, that everyone, without exception, who comes to God through Christ, will find in Christ a power that will effectually secure his being saved.

Understand, then, that if you wish to come to God there is nothing to hinder and everything to help you. Christ does not block the way, but opens it: 'I am the door.' No one is met with a refusal, for every possible ground of refusal He has Himself abolished. If you have wandered as far from God as it is possible for a human soul to go, you have not reached a point to which Christ has not come. For He came to seek and to save that which was lost, to preach peace to them that are afar off. If your sin is so great that pardon seems to you impossible, that is because you are measuring God's mercy by your own standard and not by His, for He has declared that where sin has abounded grace has much more abounded. If you say your heart is too hard to be subdued and moulded by the will of Christ, that again is because you are judging of His power by your own, or at least because you take it at your own estimate instead of at His. And this is just where the root of the difficulty lies. A man who cannot forgive himself thinks that God cannot forgive him either. When you cannot break the fetters of your own sin, you cannot believe it is possible to break them at all. In short, Christ becomes to you very much what you yourself are. You invest Him with as much strength as you possess, and you limit Him with the weakness that bounds and circumscribes your own efforts. But that is precisely what we are warned against. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.' In other words, we are not to reduce God to our own stature, and then come to our conclusions as to what He can do for us. We must go to Scripture itself for our knowledge of Him. We must go to Christ's own words to learn what He can do. And we must correct and enlarge our natural notions of His character and purpose by what He declares explicitly about Himself. Especially must we widen our conceptions of His mercy, removing persistently one after another those innumerable limitations which our unbelief has imposed upon it, till it coincides exactly with His own word: 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' None have failed of salvation because Christ could not save them. No one has come to Him and found that, while He could bring everyone else to God, there was something in his case that baffled His power, or made him an exception to the free and universal offer of His help. Do you believe it?

Come with me to mediæval times for a moment, and look on this picture from the life of Catherine of Siena. There was a certain criminal, Nicolo Tuldo, who was condemned to die, and he did nothing but curse God, so that no priest would go near him. Then Catherine went, and he became quiet as a child, and he made her promise to stand beside him on the day of his execution, and, says Catherine, speaking of the scene: 'He laid his head upon my bosom, and I said, "Comfort thee, my brother, the block shall soon become thy marriage altar; the blood of Christ shall bathe thy sins away." And when the time came for him to die he died as a gentle lamb, and his last words were, "Jesus, Catherine, Jesus."' 'Ah,' but you say, 'that is a mediæval story; that happened in the age of faith; such things do not happen now.' Well, here is something that happened quite recently. I read in a paper one morning the story of a dreadful murder. The murderer was condemned, and justly condemned, and, I said in my heart, if ever a man deserved to be hanged it was that man. I felt as though I would like to see him hanged, so atrocious was the crime. I thought no more of it, but a few months later I met a friend of mine, a minister, who, among other duties, had become a visiting chaplain at Wandsworth gaol, and he told me about this man, this execrable villain, this human

viper, whose crime was so atrocious that men thought it was an act of just reparation to society that he should be thrust out of a decent world. My friend told me how he went to see that man in his cell, how he was as hard as iron, how at last he melted a little, how presently, with a burst of tears, he acknowledged that he once had been in a Methodist Sunday school. Then the man's heart slowly, very slowly, opened. One night when my friend was asleep, after midnight, there was a knock at his door, and a warder stood there with a message from the governor of the gaol. The governor of the gaol was not a man likely to be deceived by mock religion, and he had sent the warder to say, 'Edwards is converted.' Out of his bed my friend leaped, and through the dark night he went to Wandsworth gaol and found the poor fellow on his knees singing a hymn which he had learned as a boy in the Sunday school :

Although my sins as mountains rise
And soar and reach to heaven,
Forgiveness is above the skies,
And I may be forgiven.

When the time came for that poor fellow to die he went down the dismal path to the scaffold softly whispering :

Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly.[1]

¶ This was J. B. Gough's text. Not that he held any proprietary rights in it. John Bunyan would dispute any such pretensions. 'At another time,' says Bunyan, 'I was much under this question : "Whether the blood of Christ was sufficient to save my soul?" in which doubt I continued from morning till about seven or eight at night : and at last, when I was, as it were, quite worn out with fear, lest it should not lay hold on me, these words did sound suddenly within my heart : "He is able." But methought, this word "able" was spoke loud unto me; it showed a great word, it seemed to be writ in great letters, and gave such a jostle to my fear and doubt as I never had before or after. For "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him."'

'Is there salvation for me, even for me?' asks J. B. Gough, in his despair.

'Is the blood of Christ sufficient to save my soul, even mine?' asks John Bunyan, in that anxious hour.

And to both of them there came the same reply : 'He is able to save to the uttermost!'

'It is a great word!' says Gough.

'It seems to be writ in great letters!' says Bunyan.

And by that gallant and assuring word they were both greatly delivered.[1]

2. *Its Efficacy.*—But Christ's ability to save not only meets us at the threshold, as it were, of our approach to God, and assures us of its sufficiency to bring us into His fellowship, it also assures us of His power to complete the process which He thus begins. He is able to save to the uttermost. This does not mean to the end of life, or up to the time of the Second Advent, though that is no doubt involved in the words. Nor does it mean that Christ's power extends so far as to reach and include those that have gone even to the farthest verge or extremity of wickedness, for that has already been implied in the words we have just considered. The idea rather is that His power is adequate to secure the perfect salvation of all who come to Him, so that nothing shall be required for its completeness which He is unable to supply.

And this is the assurance that we need. To believe in the forgiveness of our sins is a great effort of faith and really involves everything. If you receive or grasp Christ as able to save you, as having a mercy that awaits to cover all your need, you have already achieved what faith finds by far its hardest exercise. You have surmounted what opens the way, and the whole way, to ultimate and final victory. But along that way there are innumerable obstacles and bitter enemies to overcome. You find in yourself a host of things that not only show you how far you are as yet from being completely safe, but thrust upon you the fear that you can never be. They even seem to mock you for being so foolish as to have believed for a moment that such a thing was possible. And they threaten both to defy your future progress and utterly to wreck and obliterate every trace of past attainment. The smouldering fires of half-extinguished passion flicker up on the slightest

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Evangelistic Note*, 202

[1] F. W. Boreham, *A Bunch of Everlastings*, 104.

provocation and strive to resume their old ascendency. Evil habits re-assert themselves at times, and seem as stubborn and unyielding as they ever were. Subtle currents of envy and malice betray their presence in the most humiliating ways, and a deep-seated pride and self-righteousness refuse to acknowledge the power of the Cross. Not only so, winds of doctrine carry you about, spectres of doubt start up to trouble you. A dull indifference to Divine things, a sullen reluctance to rise to higher heights of holiness or consecration to God, baffles you and holds you down as with a dead weight. Indeed, there is so much in you that is opposed to God and seems to resist the influence and supremacy of grace, that a perfect salvation seems to you an almost impossible consummation.

Now, the successful issue of the process of salvation depends on what Christ is able to provide and to do. If there is any limit to His power, or any defect attaching to it, there will be a corresponding risk. If in any respect He is incompetent, then you may anticipate disaster. But in Him dwells all the fullness of Divine grace. Everything that we lack and require to have we find in Him, and in its infinite perfection. There is no weakness that He cannot develop into strength, no spiritual emptiness that He cannot fill, no darkness that He cannot enlighten. There are no hindrances so determined that He cannot carry you triumphantly over them, no temptations so insidious or strong but that He can make a way of escape so that you shall be able to bear them. The most impoverished characters, out of which every virtue seems to have leaked, and which have become the home of all sorts of foulness, He can renovate and enrich with every good gift. The difference in the demands which the best and the most sinful make upon Him is as nothing compared with the difference between the poverty of both and His ability to meet it. All alike require a power that unspeakably exceeds their own, a power that is Divine; and the varying degrees in which they may require it vanish when you remember that in every case it must be so great as to be beyond the limits of human measurement. If, then, you come to Christ and place yourself in His hands, you need have no fear that you will exhaust His saving capabilities. They will reveal themselves just in proportion as your own needs constrain you to test them, and you may be sure they will not fail you. He is your abiding guarantee against loss and the risk of perishing. He interposes and says: 'Able to save to the uttermost.'

¶ I remember once taking a friend of mine into an assembly which was to her very strange in its enthusiasm and intense spiritual atmosphere. She had never been in anything like it before. I did not know whether she would agree with everything she heard, but afterwards she said: 'One thing I was struck with.' 'What was that?' I said. She answered: 'There was such an absence of care on their faces.' They were there in hundreds, perhaps thousands—almost all of them poor people; but they were saved from care. What a wonderful testimony! 'The solar light' shone out of those poor tabernacles because the Shekinah was within. They had an uttermost salvation, for Christ's promises reveal a peace which can deliver us even from our cares.[1]

Our Intercessor.

Heb. vii. 25.—'He ever liveth to make intercession for them.'

The work of Christ on earth as Priest was but a beginning. It was as Aaron He shed His blood; it is as Melchizedek that He now lives within the veil to continue His work 'after the power of an endless life.' As Melchizedek is more glorious than Aaron, so it is in the work of intercession that the Atonement has its true power and glory. 'It is Christ that died, *yea, rather* . . . who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' That intercession is an intense reality, a work that is absolutely necessary, and without which the continued application of redemption cannot take place. In the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus the wondrous reconciliation took place by which man became partaker of the Divine life and blessedness. But the real personal appropriation of this reconciliation in each of His members here below cannot take place without the unceasing exercise by the Head in heaven of His Divine power. In all conversion and sanctification, in every victory over sin and the world, there is a real forth-putting of the power of Him who is mighty to save. And this exercise of His power takes place only through

[1] E. W. Moore, *The Promised Rest*, 75.

His prayer: He asks of the Father, and receives from the Father. '*He is able* to save to the uttermost, *because* he ever liveth to make intercession.' There is not a need of His people but He receives in intercession what the Godhead has to give: His mediation on the throne is as real and indispensable as on the cross. Nothing takes place without His intercession; it engages all His time and powers, is His unceasing occupation at the right hand of the Father.

1. Whether His intercession is vocal or voiceless—whether He pleads with words and arguments, or only by the silent presentation of His vicarious sufferings as the price of our redemption, is a matter of no real importance. If we heard Him praying for us in the next room, mentioning our names to the Father, telling Him how much He had done and endured to save us, and imploring Him by His own infinite love to grant us the purchased pardon, succour, holiness, and eternal life, doubtless we should be greatly comforted and encouraged. But is the intercession less real to a true faith because we do not hear it, as the disciples did in the supper-room, or amid the shades of Olivet? We know that He has 'entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' Is not this enough? With all His reeking wounds, He has ascended to the Father. As a lamb newly slain, He stands ever before the throne. His presence there immortalizes Calvary in the memory of God. Is it not as if His actual crucifixion were renewed and perpetuated in heaven—as if He had carried His cross with Him when He ascended, and planted it in the very presence of the Father, and still hung there convulsed and fainting—a constant appeal in our behalf alike to the Divine justice and the Divine mercy?

Æschylus, an illustrious Greek poet, was condemned to die. As they were about to lead him forth to execution, his brother Aminius, who had fought bravely at Marathon, Salamis, and Platæa, and in the service of his country had lost an arm, advanced in front of the judges, threw off his mantle, presented the maimed member, and silently pointed to his brother. The voiceless appeal prevailed, and Æschylus was promptly pardoned. With a pathos and a power inconceivably greater there pleads for us the Divine Brother whom we have betrayed and crucified; not for a solitary offence, but for sins more numerous than the sands of the sea; not for a poor mortal life, but for the precious life of the soul He has ransomed; not as a man before a human tribunal, but as Jehovah's consubstantial and co-eternal Fellow; not on the ground of service rendered and suffering endured which others had a right to demand, but in view of the voluntary surrender of Himself as our substitute to the agony and the infamy of the Cross.

2. And whatever the qualities desirable in an advocate, He possesses them all in the highest degree of excellence.

(1) *Do you want wisdom?*—He is the wisdom of God. In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. With perfect understanding, infallible judgment, and incomparable skill, He will certainly conduct your cause to the happiest issue, foiling every adversary, providing for every emergency, and securing the eternal salvation of all them that believe.

(2) *Do you require interest?*—He has made your cause His own, and identified your redemption with His eternal glory. With the ardour of an elder brother He pleads for you, demanding on your behalf what He shed His blood to procure. His honour as Mediator is bound up in His success. If He succeed not, His plan of redemption is a failure, and the travail of His soul is vain.

(3) *Do you desire sympathy?*—You have not an high priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of your infirmities. In all your afflictions He is afflicted. That He might be able to enter into your feelings, He visited your sinful world, assumed your suffering nature, was made in all things like His brethren, and was tempted in all points as they are, yet without sin. 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows';

> And in his measure feels afresh
> What every member bears.

(4) *Do you demand faithfulness?*—He is 'a faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.' He is a true Friend that loveth at all times—a friend that sticketh closer than a brother—without variableness or shadow of turning—the same

yesterday, and to-day, and forever. Can such an advocate deceive and betray His clients? The mother may forget her child; but 'he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself.' In such hands your interests are secure, though the earth dissolve and the heavens pass away. Till His mediatorial work is finished, He shall not faint nor be weary.

(5) *Do you ask for influence?*—He is the well-beloved and only begotten Son of the Judge with whom He pleads. In Him the Father is ever well pleased, and Him He heareth alway. There is between your Advocate and your Judge a perfect unity of nature and of will. Christ asks for you only what the Father has promised, and what He delights to grant. How could you disregard the petition of your own dear child, asking the very thing you had pledged yourself to bestow? And is God less likely to regard the prayer of His eternal Son for the saving mercies of the covenant ordered in all things and sure?

The Father hears him pray,
His dear anointed One;
He cannot turn away
The presence of his Son.

Our High Priest.

Heb. viii. 1.—'We have such an high priest.'

THIS Epistle to the Hebrews was written to comfort certain people who were troubled and discouraged. The writer wanted to help and encourage them. He wanted to put Christ before them in a way which would do this. And for this purpose he described Christ as the High Priest. He saw that this would bring to them in a downhearted time comforting and strengthening thoughts. But human needs do not greatly vary; they remain in their substance much the same, they call for the same remedies; and the letter written in the wisdom of God's providence for the comfort of the Hebrews has been preserved by His wisdom for ours.

'We have an high priest.' What did the people to whom he wrote understand when he said that? There is no doubt about the answer. They would think, and he was thinking, of the Jewish high priest, who ministered to God in Tabernacle or Temple. For he was writing to Hebrews, Hebrew Christians, Jews who had become Christians, and he wrote to console them for the loss of what they had had as Jews. You must understand that at the very beginning, when Jews believed the gospel and became Christians, they did not think of leaving their old religion to join Christ, they joined Christ because they saw that He was going to complete all that they, as Jews, had believed and hoped. But there came a sore trial, when they found that they got more and more separated from their own people. They lost their Temple and all its glorious services; they could no longer follow the high priest as he performed on the great days the service of God. They were left, as it were, out in the cold. Then it was that their teacher wrote for their comfort these words, 'We have an High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God.' It is as if he said, 'If you have understood what a high priest is, and all the worship in the Temple, of which he is the leader, you will find that in Christ you have all that, only perfect instead of imperfect, in substance instead of shadow, eternal instead of temporary and passing.

What was there in the thought of having a high priest which made it good news for the Hebrew Christians that Jesus was such an one for them?

1. A high priest, as Hebrew Christians would understand the thought, was the sign of a covenant between them and God. The worship of the Jews, their Temple and its order, the sacrifices and offerings, and the feasts, were all to them signs of God's special mercy and favour, because they were given by God, and made after the pattern showed in the mount. We lose half their meaning if we forget this. Their value to the Jews lay not merely in their own fitness or beauty, but also in the people's belief that God had given them to Israel, and in giving them had pledged Himself to be the God of Israel. This was what made them so dear, this was what made the loss of them so grievous. And of all these things, of all this great system, the high priest was the centre and head. Round him it moved, through him it acted. His great action on one day in the year, when he went alone into the Holiest Place and made atonement for himself and for the whole people by sprinkling the blood there, was the centre and crown of all that great outward order which bound Israel to God. When the writer spoke of Jesus as their High Priest, he

meant to show them that, instead of losing all this, they had it still.

And for us to know Jesus as our High Priest means knowing that we are bound to God in a covenant of His making, like that of Israel, but far wider, and deeper, and closer. It is no earthly sanctuary which our High Priest enters, no earthly tabernacle of which He is Minister, but heaven itself; and the outer courts of that Sanctuary are wide, we feel, to include all creation; to embrace all this lower life of ours, so far as by the power of the Spirit and by faith in our High Priest it is lifted out of mere earthliness, and becomes a house of living stones, alive with worship and service.

2. For this is the second thought which the name of High Priest brings—the thought of access to God. 'That he might bring us to God.' The words touch an answering note in our hearts. That is what we want—to come to God, to be able to draw near; not merely to receive His gifts, even Christ as a Gift; not merely to know that there is a link between us and Him, but to have a way laid open to come to Him. This was what, in a manner, the high priest of Israel had when he entered into the Holiest once a year, and what in a manner all his people, worshipping outside while he entered, enjoyed through him. They had a right of approach. And this is what the High Priest opens to us, 'a new and living way,' not for Himself only, and once a year, but for us all, and ever open: and we may have 'boldness to enter,' now, every one of us if we will, 'into the Holiest'; boldness to come not merely before the mercy-seat of an earthly temple, but before the Throne of God Himself.

This is what we need. Our hearts cry out for God. Like the iron to the magnet they are drawn to Him. The love with which He Himself endowed them springs back to Him who gave it. How much more would this be so, how much more clearly our hearts would speak out if we had not so often stifled their voice, if we had not let hours and days, perhaps weeks or months or years, go by, in which selfishness or sin possessed them so that for very shame no voice or prayer could rise? Still, by God's mercy, there is something in us of that which is man's true state. 'My soul is athirst for God.'

To desire to approach, to be miserable away from God in a far country, shut out of the sight of His eyes, and yet to feel unworthy to draw near, unfit for Him, our souls too stained for His Presence, our prayers too pitifully weak and cold and empty to be worth offering—that is our state. For that trouble there is comfort in any thought of the mercy of God, but there is far deeper and far distincter comfort in the knowledge of what the mercy of God has done to meet our need; how He has provided for us a High Priest in Jesus Christ, able in His perfect innocence to draw near to God, able to sprinkle us with the blood of His own sacrifice, and to bring us under His cover and guidance, behind Him, with Him, in Him, pardoned, received, restored, with tongues loosened and hearts emboldened, to the throne of grace.

'Holy of Holies,' awful name—
Where in a still retreat,
The Presence of the Godhead dwelt,
Upon the mercy-seat:
Veiled from the eye in darkness dim,
Enthroned between the cherubim.

Once in the year, within the veil,
In mystic robes arrayed,
The High Priest entered, and with blood
An expiation made:
But blood of victims could not cleanse
And purge the guilt of man's offence.

O Great Redeemer! God and Man,
Victim and Priest in one;
Thou, entering Heaven with Thine own Blood,
Didst once for all atone;
Thou hast removed the awful cloud,
Which once the oracle did shroud.

Now a bright Rainbow o'er the Throne
Sheds lustre from above,
Where showers of Judgment mildly shine,
Gilded by beams of Love;
Thy Blood, O Lamb of God, is there,
Pleading for us with ceaseless Prayer.

Cleansed by that Blood, we now approach
Boldly the Throne of Grace:
O may we, following the Lamb,
Come to that Holy Place;
Lord, who for us didst deign to bleed,
Be Thou our help in time of need! [1]

[1] C. Wordsworth.

The Heavenly Pattern.

Heb. viii. 5.—'See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.'

We have in the book of Exodus the account of that visit which Moses paid to Jehovah Himself in the excellent glory above Mount Sinai—a visit lasting forty days and forty nights, during which time Moses received from God most explicit instructions concerning a tabernacle which he was to make for the particular dwelling-place of Jehovah among His people. And not only did he receive instructions—or, as we might say, specifications—concerning the structure of that building, but he also saw the heavenly things, the heavenly purpose, the great truths of which that building, when it should be finished, would be but a type, a kind of parable in gold and linen and brass and silver.

In other words, Moses was invited up into the presence of God and into the vision of the heavenly things in order that he might reproduce in type the things which he had seen. Again and again was given to him the solemn exhortation: 'See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.'

Just so we are set in the world to have visions, to go up into the mount, to see, in the presence of God, the Divine truth concerning human life, and then to work it out into character and conduct. It may be said without exaggeration, without qualification, that, in a very real thorough broad sense, this sums up the thought of Christian living and the purpose of God in our redemption. What may we learn from the tabernacle in the wilderness that shall help us in reproducing, in character and conduct, heavenly things? The commission to Moses was that it was to be beautiful. The life that you and I are commissioned to live, and the character you and I are under responsibility to form, must then be, first of all, beautiful.

1. There have been many ideals of character, and each of them, no doubt, so formed under Christian influence that they contain important elements of truth. The Puritan character was, in many respects, most admirable. It had in it elements of strength, of sincerity, of simplicity, of great loyalty to God and of obedience to what was understood to be the will of God. No fragmentary form of character could be more noble than the Puritan ideal; and yet, as we look closely at that ideal, and as we measure it up against Christ, we begin to see that it is lacking precisely in this element of beauty. In Him there is nothing lacking, nothing in excess. Jesus Christ was perfectly strong. No Puritan was ever such a rock-man as He, and yet there was nothing hard or repelling in Christ's firmness; it was clothed in gentleness; and because He was supremely strong, He could be supremely gentle, patient, and sympathetic. In everything God makes there is first of all order, then comes symmetry. You remember in the 21st chapter of Revelation the description of the heavenly Jerusalem and its proportions; the breadth and the length and the height of it were equal. That is God's idea of symmetry. First of all, then, that tabernacle was beautiful, and it was beautiful because there was an ordered harmony in it. Everything was beautiful. And if we are reproducing the heavenly character here, then will, according to the prayer of the Psalmist, 'the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.'

2. The second characteristic which we need to notice in the tabernacle built by Moses is its costliness. It was not a cheap thing which Moses built. God did not propose that the building in which His glory was in a very particular and local way to be manifested—a building in itself a type of the costliest of all costly offerings, Jesus Christ—should be without cost. Everything in it was of the most precious materials. The very boards were overlaid with gold, solid gold. The seven-branched candlestick was of gold. There was embroidery of purple and scarlet and red and blue with costliest work. The Holy Spirit endowed the craftsmen with more than earthly wisdom and skill that they might carve and embroider and engrave the beautiful details of that edifice. Splendid jewels flashed from the breast-plate of the high priest and glittered upon his shoulders. Infinite skill of weaving and carving went into it. The first thought was beauty, then, and the second costliness.

So these lives of ours will be heavenly in proportion as cost has gone into them. The costliest gift that heaven had was given for us, and we shall never come to the acme of Christian character and life without sacrifice—the best and costliest we

have to give. It costs the renunciation of the lesser that we may have the greater, that we may grasp the choicest things and build them into character.

3. The third striking characteristic of the tabernacle is that its beauty was chiefly inward. All the glory of the gold, and all the beauty of the engravers' and weavers' and embroiderers' art were covered from outward observation. Christ was like that. He was not a man of marvellous beauty of visage and outward splendour of appearance: 'When we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.' Here, eminently, is a lesson for our day. The great temptation is to make religion a matter of externalities alone; but *to be*, rather than to do, is the central thought of God with regard to the character of His people; to be beautiful within.

There is the danger of hypocrisy, the danger that we shall seem to be more devoted, more consecrated, more engaged with the things of God than we really are. There is nothing for which Christ feels such an aversion as for hypocrisy. And the essence of hypocrisy is trying to seem to be a little sweeter, a little better, a little more devoted than we really are. When Moses came down from his forty days' visit with Jehovah, he had caught the very radiance of God's glory, but 'Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone.' There is nothing more odious than self-conscious piety.[1]

God's Pattern for our Life.

Heb. viii. 5.—'See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.'

In the chapels at the back of the choir of Cologne Cathedral are preserved the original parchments on which are drawn the plan of the great minster. During all the centuries through which the building has been going on, the men who have been working at it have had in reverence the original thoughts of the master-minds who conceived it.

1. We have only to enlarge the conception and to make it general, and we come to one of the loftiest and most inspiring thoughts of human life. As the old Tabernacle, before it was built, existed in the mind of God, so all the unborn things of life, the things that are to make the future, are already living in their perfect ideas in Him, and when the future comes, its task will be to match those Divine ideas with their material realities, to translate into the visible and tangible shapes of terrestrial life the facts which already have existence in the Perfect Mind. Surely in the very statement of such a thought of life there is something which ennobles and dignifies our living. It takes something of the dreadful extemporaneousness and superficialness and incoherence out of our life. The things which come to pass here in the world are not mere volunteer efforts of man's enterprise, not self-contained ventures which are responsible to nothing and to no one but themselves. For each of them there is an idea present already in the thought of God, a pattern of what each in its purest perfection is capable of being. Out of the desire to realize that idea must come the highest inspiration. In the degree to which it has realized that idea must be the standard of judgment of every work of man.

To-day begins a baby's life. A child is born into the world this morning. What shall we say about that child's unlived life? No man can tell what it will be. Its lessons are unlearned, its tasks untried, its discoveries unmade, its loves unloved, its growth entirely ungrown. It lies a little new-born unsolved problem on this the first day of its life. Is that all? Is there nowhere in the universe any picture of what that child's life ought to be, and may be? Surely there is. In God's mind there must be a picture of what that child, with his peculiar faculties and nature, may become in the completeness of his life. Years hence, when that baby of to-day has grown to be a man of forty, the real question of his life will be—what? Not the questions which his fellow-citizens of that remote day will be asking. What reputation has he won? What money has he earned? Not even, What learning has he gained? But, How far has he been able to translate into the visible and tangible realities of a life that idea which was in God's mind on that day in the old year when he was born?

2. This is true not merely of a life in its entirety, but of each single act or enterprise of life. We have not thought richly or deeply enough

[1] C. I. Schofield, *In Many Pulpits*, 269.

about any undertaking unless we have thought of it as an attempt to put into the form of action that which already has existence in the idea of God. You start upon your profession, and your professional career in its perfect conception shines already in God's sight. Already before Him there is the picture of the good physician, the broad-minded merchant, the fair-minded lawyer, the heroic minister, which you may be. You set yourself down to some hard struggle with temptation, and already in the fields of God's knowledge you are walking as possible victor, clothed in white and with the crown of victory upon your head. You build your house, and found your home. It is an attempt to realize the picture of purity, domestic peace, mutual inspiration, and mutual comfort, which God sees already. Your friendship, which begins to shape itself to-day out of your intercourse with your companion, has its pattern in the vast treasury of God's conceptions of what man, with perfect truthfulness and perfect devotion, may be to his brother man. It is not vulgar fate and destiny; it is not a mere settlement beforehand by God's foreknowledge of what each man must be and do, so that he cannot escape. The man's will is still free. The man may falsify God's picture of him, he certainly will fall short of it; but it is the essential truth of the Father comprehending all His children's lives within His own, the Infinite Nature containing the finite natures in itself and holding in itself their standard.

The distinction between ideas and forms is one which all men need to know, which many men so often seem to miss. The idea takes shape in the form, the form expresses the idea. The form, without the idea behind it, is thin and hard. The form, continually conscious of its idea, becomes rich, deep, and elastic. He who once gets a sight into that world of ideas which lies unseen behind the world of forms never can lose sight of it again, never can be content with any act of his until he has carried it into that world and matched it with its idea. To the man who is trying to do just or generous things, but who is perpetually conscious of how imperfect is the justice or the generosity of the things he does, it is a constant incentive and comfort to be sure that somewhere, in God, there is the perfect type and pattern of the thing of which he fails. That, certainly, at once preserves the loftiness of his standard and saves him from despair. This is the power of ideality, of the unfailing sight of the perfect ideas behind the imperfect form of things.

¶ George Frederic Watts spent his life in endeavouring to catch the unseen, and to put it on canvas for our profit and edification. He has painted a great picture called the 'All-pervading.' It is a wonderful figure with a marvellously spiritual face; the two large wings encircle all things, and it holds the universe as a globe in its hands. The mysterious picture, which grows upon you as you examine its daring representation, very impressively brings home the fact that underneath the world and all its parts are the Everlasting hands, and above and around are the encircling wings of God. The artist's favourite blue, which forms the background of his greatest pictures, acquires in this case a strange depth and intensity, and every square inch suggests and even represents infinity. It is a grand attempt to teach the solemn truth that the great reality at the core of all things is God. In painting landscape Watts is inspired by the same spiritual impulse. It is not matter he paints so much as the spirit that moulds and animates its forms and lines. I was privileged not long ago to see a picture of Mount Ararat. It is not only the mountain that you see, but the spirit of the mountains. His portraits show the same method of work. He studied his man, read his writings, acquainted himself with his life, and endeavoured to put on canvas not only the lines of the man's face, but the great controlling thought which inspired his personality. His portrait of Gladstone has helped me to understand the inner life of that incomparable statesman more effectively than any biography I have read. In all that he did he pursued the Divine patterns and endeavoured to transcribe the unseen.[1]

The Ideal.

Heb. viii. 5.—'See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.'

1. There is a pattern on the mount for all our life. There are Divine ideals for all our living—personal, domestic, civic. There is an eternal plan for character, home, church, and state.

(1) *The domestic ideal* is enthroned in God.

[1] Thomas Phillips.

Home is one of the greatest words in our vocabulary, but home without God is merely a lodging-house. The domestic divorced from the Divine is drudgery. But let home be made according to the pattern in the mount, let all the sanctities be centred round the family altar, link home with the household of God, and the veriest trifles are set to music, the commonest task becomes a poem, the ordinary routine the sphere of transfigured glory. Home is the place of genial laughter, unlimited confidence, saving sacrifices, holy desires, pure thoughts, and angel visits. In the Mount of Communion, you are in touch with God, and home is part of God's heaven. Make all things in the home according to the pattern in the mount.

(2) And there is *the ecclesiastical ideal.* The connotation of the word 'Church' varies in various atmospheres. To some it is a rigid system; to some a thing of architecture; to others a thing of blood, a body of living men, a temple of living stones, a regenerated and a regenerating society, a live agency of the Kingdom of God, a modern body in which Christ can continue the ministry of the Incarnation. The Church is an extension of the Divine life. The local church is part of the Church Universal. The Catholic Church is part of the eternal church of the Living God. Make all things in the local church according to the pattern in the mount.

(3) There is *the civic ideal.* God is the Father of families, and ideally civic life is the extension of the domestic. Civic life is the continuity, in a wider sphere, of family life. 'Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.' In the Old Testament, the ways of God are seen to be social and national. Jesus comes with the gospel of the Kingdom, claiming the whole world for Himself, insisting on the regeneration of men and the reconstruction of society on the basis of brotherhood and love. According to Jesus, a city should not be an aggregation of money-makers, but an ideal society, a Christian brotherhood, the city of God. Our civic life must be tested by the ethical principles of this revelation of God as Father, men as brothers, life as love. The principles of heaven and of home, the ideals of our faith, must become our practical politics.

And the wildest socialistic idea ever entertained or rejected, the most foolish Utopia ever imagined, is much nearer the pattern in the mount than the utterance of the most brilliant cynic who denies the possibility of worldly righteousness. There was never a prophecy too radiant with hope, never a faith too big, never a dream too fair. The pattern in the mount transcends all our socialistic fantasies. Its adoption would mean the solution of all our social problems, the realization of the highest possibilities of human life, and the fulfilment of eternal purposes. The community would be the larger home of the citizen, and the Christ who is the Saviour of the soul, the Brother of men, the King of love. That is the ideal—that your city should be the City of God, lying four-square, with gates open on every side, that all nations should bring their honour and glory into it. The city without a church, because the city is the church; without a temple, because all toil is temple service—that is the ideal.

2. But how are we to set about the task?

(1) First of all, let us keep our imaginations freshly and vividly furnished with the ideal we wish to realize. Let us beware lest the brilliant colours fade away like rich furnishings that have been exposed to the sunlight. Don't let the garish day rob the heavenly pattern of its heavenly hue. And let us give time to furnish our imaginations. Let us make time to be idealists. No man is wasting time when he is gazing at the ideal. A friend of Westcott's wrote this great word about him, 'He was strong because he saw, and *took time to see.*' Yes, that is what we need. Amid all our jostling and clamouring realities let us take time to contemplate the vision on the mount. The insurging world is so persistent, and in the eager practicality of our natures we are apt to lose our sight. It is so easy to lose the mountain, and the mountain air, and the mountain vision, and we have all done it.

(2) And, in the second place, if we would retain the vision of the ideal, and be ministers of its incarnation, we must avoid all disgusting habits, whether the vulgarity be obtrusively bald, or concealed beneath thin and superficial refinements. Meretricious graces can hide a frightfully destructive vice. And there is nothing like a disgusting habit for hiding the mountain, and eclipsing its ideals. As soon as we become lost in the giddy mazes of a carnal sensualism we

shall assuredly lose the mystic apocalypse which is unveiled by our God.

> I saw that every morning, far withdrawn
> Beyond the darkness and the cataract,
> God made Himself an awful rose of dawn
> Unheeded!

Unheeded! The ideal was lost. Passion had wiped out the vision. If thou wouldst keep 'the pattern in the mount' keep thyself clean. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'

In the Mount.

Heb. viii. 5.—'Shewed to thee in the mount.'

In the Mount, and in a very special way, God spoke to that which was deepest in Moses; the Eternal Spirit touched his spirit in some way which carried with it so much of certainty, of directness, of clearness of spiritual insight that it is described as a 'speaking face to face.' That was his time of inspiration, of enlightenment, when he saw truth clearly, when he felt it strongly, when he had not to grope his way, feeling for it step by step, putting out his reason before him as a staff to guide him, but when he, as it were, *saw* the heavenly things in the brightness of clear indisputable intuition. But then he could not remain upon the Mount. That spiritual elevation, that communion with the Divine, which so thrilled him that the inward glow of feeling lit up his face with radiant brightness, was not given to him for a permanent enjoyment. In truth, it was not given to him for mere enjoyment at all. It was given to him for a purpose, and the purpose was that he might carry out in action his task as he had seen it, that he might give actual concrete embodiment to those great thoughts which had filled his mind in the time of inspiration. Now, that is true for all of us in our measure. We have analogous experiences, and there is the same use to be made of them.

There comes to us all times of exceptional insight, of moral elevation—yes, of inspiration—when in a special way our spirits are touched by the Spirit of Truth and Goodness—times when we are upon the Mount, and see heavenly things clearly, and a higher pattern of life is shown to us. To every man these higher moments come, be they many or few. For our life—our spiritual life—does not stretch along one uniform level, nor is it even a steady, gradual ascent. In the life which is most regular there is still room for that which is only occasional; in that which is kept most orderly, with most punctual observances of duty and faithful use of privilege, there occur visitations of the spirit which are intermittent, and which cannot be counted upon as to when they should come or how long they shall stay. We do not realize the deeper meaning of life except at moments—moments which may possibly supply the inspiration of life, but which cannot possibly form its substance.

1. These hours of vision may be associated with the utmost variety of circumstances. It may be simply interruption of our ordinary work. We have been going on from day to day in the regular customary routine. Each day has been so filled with its multiplicity of engagements, its interests, its distractions, its pleasures, its annoyances, as to leave little leisure and less inclination for that quiet and serious thought in which we seek to see life steadily, and see it whole. We accept things as they are without asking questions. We drift indolently, or we rush eagerly with the crowd, without seriously putting it to ourselves whither all this is tending—whether we are making any worthy use of our life and of our powers. We are so closely absorbed in our work that we fail to see it in its true proportions. We need to stand a little back from it, as an artist has to do to judge of the effect of the picture he is painting. And sometimes God compels a man to stand aside and look upon his life and his work from a little distance. He takes him apart from the multitude, that he may open his ears to voices that cannot be heard amid the bustle of the crowd. In the confinement of his chamber his spirit chafes at first as he thinks of the great tide of men with eager interests which flows each morning city-wards and ebbs at evening, and of all the busy life from which he is excluded. By-and-by a change comes over his spirit—the roar of that loud stunning tide sounds faint and far off; his interest in it becomes strangely weakened; other visions open out before his mind. He sees deeper than the surface stir and bustle of life, its ambitions and its rivalries, into the meaning of life itself,

its possibilities and its purposes. He learns to see things in their true proportions, and wakes up to the discovery that he has been exaggerating terribly certain aspects of them. A Diviner pattern of life is being shown to him—an ideal higher in its aims, in its methods, and in its motives; and when he comes back to take up again among men his daily tasks, surely it is with an earnest purpose to make all things according to the nobler pattern that has been shown him.

2. But there are experiences tending towards similar results that enter much more frequently into life than such as that. To all men, and most of all to those who have youth and hope on their side, a period of leisure and recreation and contact with nature is not more a rest than an inspiration, a time of sanguine and earnest forecasting of the future, a time of forming of plans and contemplating ideals, of storing up impulse and stimulus, of girding up the loins of the mind with strenuous, self-denying purpose. Many of us must feel that some of our most fruitful hours, those of which the results have spread out through all the years of later life, and are working within us at this moment, have been hours, not of hard toil, but of what some would call idle reverie, in which the mind, relieved from pressure, played freely round subjects of intensest interest, personal or universal; and while we mused the fire within burned into a glow which seemed to consume a whole mass of unworthy thoughts, and to impart a purer outlook. Surely there is not one of us who does not bring back to work something of higher aim and more resolute purpose. There have been times amid the silences of Nature when our mind rose up in involuntary protest against that which had been, against the slackness and the slothfulness and the selfishness of it, against its poverty, its frivolity, its folly; and there rose the alluring and inspiring vision of something better, of life lived at a higher level, with the consciousness of solid achievement, and with worthier aims. The leaven of that future began forthwith to work in us. In the strength of that vision you will go forward, some of you, like Elijah, many days and nights until you come to another mount of God.

3. There are other times—sadder times—which have worked to the same effect—hours, not of elevation, but of deep depression, when we saw things after the pattern of the heavenly. It may have been an hour of stern self-rebuke, of humiliation and shame; when conscience justly scourged and spared not, or when you felt yourself baffled and helpless in the presence of a great perplexity; or the day you came back from standing beside a new-filled grave, and realized that the world was emptier and poorer than it had been a week before. Men looking up from deep places, it is said, see stars at noonday; and sometimes it is when it is sighing its *De Profundis* that the soul catches the vision of God. Then you saw light in God's light, and you knew that you saw. You saw your life as it had been, saw it as it ought to be, saw it as, by the grace of Christ, it might yet be, saw it clearly and brightly and attractively. And you formed your resolutions. What came of them? Are you trying now to make your life after the pattern that was showed to you?

4. There are countless hours of vision which we need not stay to classify. We wake up one day to feel as if all our previous knowledge of God had been but hearsay; we feel, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.' Life seems to begin anew from times like that. We have accepted truth upon the authority of others; the time comes when we say, 'We see.' The entrance of God's Word gives light and so certifies itself. Our own hold of truth is never satisfactory until we thus see. The man who is to influence other minds must first himself see heavenly things upon the Mount. The prophet who is to be, not a mere echo, but a living voice to touch the hearts of men, must first of all be a seer. He must speak from his own intuition to speak with real effect, not from what someone else has told him, however true it may be and however high his authority. Not what he has read or heard, but what he has seen—his own vision of God and truth—that he must proclaim. A man may speak—often doubtless does speak—not from clear, certain insight, but from the use of his faculties of memory and inference, combining, arranging stored-up materials of knowledge and thought. Then he speaks doubtfully. But sometimes he speaks from clear, indisputable intuition; what he says may be partial, fragmentary,

but he knows that it is true; and then he is simply indifferent to the criticism of men; it matters nothing to him if he can only help them to see what he sees.

'Gradually,' says Professor Rufus Jones in his *Story of George Fox,* 'gradually, in 1646 Fox began to realize that God himself was speaking to him in his own soul. Truths seemed to flash into his mind, like wavy streamers of northern lights. He would suddenly *see* a truth as though electric signs were signalled to him from a central station. It dawned upon him that God was the same now as when He revealed messages to prophets in olden times, and could still reveal His will. He saw that temples and churches were not the most holy places; the soul of man itself was the really holy place, for God and man could meet therein. He saw that any man could be a priest if he only learned how to hear the voice of God within his soul and to obey it, and could tell others how to hear it and understand it. To do this one would not need to study theology for years and years in a university; it would be necessary only that one should be quick and sensitive to hear the Divine voice in the soul, and be ready and eager to *do* what God revealed there.'[1]

A Covenant.

Heb. viii. 8.—'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel.'

A COVENANT was an agreement between two parties, binding them to co-operation and mutual service on certain specified conditions, which were designated 'the words of the covenant.' When two tribes would live in amity, intermarrying and trading with each other, they made a covenant. When a king was chosen, a covenant was confirmed between him and his subjects. Conspirators also pledged themselves by a covenant. And so did friends like David and Jonathan.

The usage was universal in the East, and it is the distinction of Israel that she carried the idea into the domain of religion and conceived herself as standing in covenant with the Lord her God. It was a daring conception, yet there was no irreverence in it, no lowering of the Divine supremacy. A federal relationship was not necessarily a relationship of equality. A conqueror might make a covenant with the vanquished, sparing them when they lay at his mercy, and admitting them to terms of mutual respect and obligation. There was thus no arrogance in the idea of a covenant between the Lord and His people, yet there was something of audacity. It was a courageous faith which conceived of God as deigning to deal thus with the children of men. It was in truth an anticipation of that 'boldness toward God' which is the supreme privilege of Christian sonship.

In one of her golden books, *The Covenant of Life and Peace,* Dora Greenwell writes: 'I sometimes wish that we were, as a people, more in the habit of considering our relations with God under what may be called their covenanted aspect. Salvation in Christ is not only a gift from God to man; it is also a bond, a living perpetual tie, placing us in assured relations with the Father, and enabling us to take up that ancient plea, "have respect unto the Covenant," with all the energies of the renewed nature. "The writings of the New Covenant"; how I love this, the title by which the Gospel writings collectively were known to the primitive Church! It brings them before us as that which they truly are, the very bonds and indentures of our fellowship in Christ Jesus.'

1. Properly speaking, there were only two covenants between Israel and her God—the first covenant, the covenant of the Law, which defined and confirmed all previous engagements; and the new and better covenant, the covenant of Grace in our Lord Jesus Christ. The former would have sufficed had its condition of obedience been observed; but Israel proved unfaithful. In the pathetic language of Holy Scripture, 'they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves down unto them: they turned aside quickly out of the way wherein their fathers walked, obeying the commandments of the Lord; but they did not so.' And thus the covenant was cancelled. 'They rebelled, and grieved his holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.' He abandoned them to the lust of their hearts, and they sustained disaster after disaster until they were stricken with the final blow, the destruction of their city and their long exile in Babylon.

[1] R. M. Jones, *The Story of George Fox,* 13.

It seemed as though their ruin were complete and irretrievable; but the faithfulness of the Lord proved their deliverance. They had forsaken Him, but He would not forsake them. His honour was at stake. He had chosen them for His people, and it would have meant the defeat of His gracious purpose had He cast them off. It is a shame to a workman when his material is wasted in his hands, or when he begins a task and fails to accomplish it, like him who, desiring to build a tower, laid the foundation and was not able to finish it, and had to leave it incomplete, a monument of his incompetence, the jest of every passer-by. God is a faithful Creator, and He will not 'forsake the work of his own hands'; what He begins He will perfect.

> What began best, can't end worst,
> Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

His honour was at stake, and His heart was engaged too. He had set His love on Israel, and love will have its way. It is 'strong as death. . . . Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.' His heart still yearned for his faithless people. 'Thus saith the Lord, I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.' And the cry of His heart was: 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together.'

2. He could not let them go, and therefore He turned to them in their misery and 'devised means that his banished be not expelled from him.' He raised up a prophet in their midst, and charged him with a message of hope. They had broken the first covenant, but He would grant them a fresh opportunity and enter into a new and better covenant with them. 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive them their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.'

This new covenant was to be, so the tremendous promise runs on, a spiritual one, an experimental and universal knowledge of God, a covenant of pardon, complete and sure. Jeremiah was allowed to see the covenant only as Moses saw the promised land from Pisgah. He never saw it realized, but he knew that every promise of God is an oath and a covenant. For he had learnt in the shocks and changes of his life the unfailing pity of Him with whom he had been privileged to have fellowship and to hold 'dialogues.' The old agreement was, 'If ye will obey my voice and do my commandments, then' so and so will happen. The old condition was, 'Do and live; be righteous and blessed!' The new condition is, 'Take and have; believe and live!' The one was law, the other is gift; the one was retribution, the other is forgiveness. One was outward, hard, rigid law, fitly 'graven with a pen of iron on the rocks for ever'; the other is impulse, love, a power bestowed that will make us obedient; and the sole condition that we have to render is the condition of humble and believing acceptance of the Divine Gift. The new covenant, in the exuberant fullness of its mercy, and in the tenderness of its gracious purposes, is at once the completion and the antithesis of the ancient covenant with its precepts and its retribution.

This glad era was ushered in by the Lord Jesus Christ, 'the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises'; and, since it was necessary that a covenant should be ratified by a sacrifice, He, the true Paschal Lamb, at once Victim and Priest, sealed the new covenant with His own precious blood. Thus it was that He interpreted His Death in the Upper Room. 'He took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins.'

'My sin!' the low despairing sigh;
'My sin!' the exceeding bitter cry,
Out of those depths is heard on high:

Glad angels hear it where they stand,
And wait—a ministering band—
Their Lord's permission and command;

It comes—and swiftly, down from heaven
A light whereby the gloom is riven!
A voice of power and peace, 'Forgiven!'[1]

The Promises of the New Covenant.

Heb. viii. 10.—'This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days.'

It is of the utmost importance to me to know how I may live in happy intercourse with God. Some relationship I must have, for I cannot get rid of God, even should I wish to do so. He will be here close upon me, knowing, watching, weighing me, whether I wish it or not. It is obviously best that the relationship should be a friendly one. I am not left in any doubt as to these terms, for this passage of Holy Scripture tells me what they are. The terms which God has proclaimed are distinctly stated. Those who read them with any care can hardly fail to notice that they consist of four promises.

1. The first promise is this: 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.' The covenant is to be an inward one. It is to be made between me and my God in the secret place. There is to be an intimate understanding in the innermost rooms of my being. It is beautiful how the Lord expresses the terms of the intimacy! Let us just glance at the different grades of fellowship. It is possible for a law to be written in a book; the law is then entirely outside the man; it is an external thing and may have no relationship to the inner life. Or the law may be put into the mind; it may mix itself with the thought; it may enter into the purpose and ambitions, and control many of the movements of the life. Or the law may be in the heart; it may be entertained by the affections, received as a welcome guest among the dispositions, live as one of the inmates of the spiritual house. Anyone can see that these are three different planes of fellowship proceeding in an ascending gradient to the intimacy of the heart. Here, our Father has proclaimed that His purpose is to create an intimacy in the heart; He will not make Himself known only in a book, or upon the plane of thought, but as a present Guest, recognized and beloved by the affections. We are to know Him in the heart; we are to discern His will by our dispositions; we are to read His purpose through the ministry of our affections.

Spirits that hold familiar intercourse with the Father must needs be very refined. The coarse and the selfish could never discern His presence, and would need some obtrusive commandments uttered in tones of thunder to wake them from their sleep. Some men's spirits are hard as stone, others are a little more plastic and are like a cactus plant, others are a little more sensitive and thrill with the motion of an oak-leaf, others are finer still, and tremble with the sensitiveness of a silver birch! I look out of my window and I can see a piece of dead timber standing immovable in the passing breeze. And I can see an oak tree whose leaves are scarcely responding to the passing gust. And I can see a silver birch whose leaves are dancing gaily at the presence of the faintest breath. The silver birch is the symbol of a refined spirit. If our spirits are attempered to exquisite discernments, purified and chastened by the Spirit of God, we shall feel the faintest coming of our Lord and be able to enter into deep appreciation of His will. We shall know Him by instinct.

2. The second promise is: 'I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.' How calm and happy is the relationship! How fruitful would be such a communion! God and His people are to share in common riches. God will offer His grace to His people: His people will offer their substance to their God. Was not this the ideal communion described by our Saviour in the parable of the prodigal son? 'Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.' *All that I have is thine.* I may come to my God and partake of His powers: 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' I can come to my God and partake of His wisdom: 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.' I can come to my God and share His purity; He

[1] S. J. Stone, *Poems and Hymns*, 102.

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will give to me of the 'river of water of life, clear as crystal', and its purifying ministry will make me clean. But there is one condition to this wondrous reception. If all that God has is to be mine, all that I have must be offered to God. It is wise to sit down and make a register of my powers, naming them one by one, and, as each is named, signing it away to the service of God. In the consecration service of the olden time the priest's ear was touched with the blood, and his hand, and even the toes of his feet. It was symbolic that all the powers of sense and of motion should be consecrated to the Lord of Life. As soon as this offering is made, there begins to flow toward me the riches of the Divine grace. 'I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.'

3. The third promise is: 'They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.' The promise tells of the personal knowledge of a personal God. The words do not speak merely of a knowledge about God, but—and it is a very different thing—of knowledge of God Himself. We all know a good deal about the king. Newspapers tell us something every day; yet few of us know the king; we are not personal friends. So there are many who know about God. The heavens declare His glory; 'the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead'; His doings at various times in the history of mankind are recorded in a book which is now published throughout the greater part of the world. Some measure of knowledge about Him is very widely diffused; men can tell of His greatness. Yet this is not the promise of the New Covenant. There are indeed many who go beyond this, and, like Abraham, know God as a Friend, like Joshua as a Leader, like St. Paul as a Saviour; yet the clause of the New Covenant promise, short as it is, goes beyond this; there is no 'as' in it. All is summed up and included in the brief pregnant words, 'All shall know me.' The poorest, the most unlearned, the youngest, the humblest may have this, the most profound knowledge of the universe, the personal knowledge of the personal God. What is the deepest knowledge of things created compared with knowledge of the Creator Himself? The gain of such a knowledge is immeasurable. Education through books is useful and good, but better is personal friendship with great, noble, and inspiring minds. Training of mind and soul and character through the Bible is of inestimable value, yet there is something better, and that is personal contact with the Person, God. This trains the character, and purifies the heart. What can be more elevating, more refining than to know God and constantly to associate with Him, or, as the Scripture calls it, to walk with Him? What can give a more restful calm in the presence of adversity or a greater sense of security when we look into the future than to know God, the ever present, the eternal?

4. The fourth promise is: 'I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.' This is a wonderful promise; God will erase my sins from His memory! If I were to name them in His presence I should find He had forgotten them! It is perhaps the most wonderful of all the tones of the evangel of grace; the sins of the forgiven child are never again to be in the Father's mind! If I am burdened about my past, if the marks of yesterday's sin still trouble me, if the signs of far-off rebellion are abounding, they shall all be transfigured in the light and life of the new covenant between me and my God. He will be merciful. The place of failure is to be beautified.

¶ I was in a friend's garden the other day, and I pointed to a peculiarly beautiful garden-bed, and in answer to my look of surprise he told me he had made it out of a dust heap! In Newcastle-on-Tyne there used to be an exceedingly ugly eyesore, almost in the very centre of the city; a great, deep, open place into which all manner of refuse was being constantly thrown. The town authorities acquired the ungainly site and have converted it into a park! It is suggestive as to how my Lord will deal with the rubbish heaps of my past days. His mercy will transfigure them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.[1]

[1] J. H. Jowett, in *The Sunday Strand*, vi, 470.

The Conscience.

Heb. ix. 9.—'As pertaining to the conscience.'

'WHAT a revolution for mankind it would be to get back "the good conscience"! Life made innocent, washed free from how much filth of remorse, guilt, contempt, sin—that vision arouses a longing more intense than that of the religious for any heaven. And it seems at least equally possible of realization! Bad conscience arises when religion and the instincts are in opposition; the more comprehensive and deep this conflict, the more guilty the conscience. But there have been religions not antagonistic to the instincts, which, instead of condemning them, have thought so well of them as to become their rule, their discipline. The religion of the Greeks was an example of this; and in Greece, accordingly, there was no "bad conscience" in our sense. Well, how is it possible, if it is possible, to regain "the good conscience"? Not by any miracle. Not by an instantaneous "change of heart"; for even the heart changes slowly. But suppose that a new instinctive religion and morality were to be set up, and painfully complied with, until they became a second nature as ours have become, should we not then gradually lose our bad conscience, born as it is out of the antagonism between instinct and morality? Nay, if we were to persevere still further until instinct and religion and morality became intermingled and indistinguishable, might we not enter the Garden of Eden again, might not innocence itself become ours? But to attain that end, an unremitting discipline, extending over hundreds of years, might be necessary; and who, in the absence of gods, is to impose that discipline?'

So says Edward Moore,[1] writing as if he knew not Christ, as if he lived before Christ came.

But when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that the Levitical gifts and sacrifices could not make the worshipper perfect 'as touching the conscience,' he is drawing a contrast between the Old and the New, and he implies that what was beyond the power of the old ritual has been accomplished through the one sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ. The great problem of all ethical religions is to take away the pain of the human conscience without deadening its functions. And that is accomplished by Christianity, which has for its centre the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The first condition of a religion which saves men is that it must not deaden the function of the conscience. The teacher of what is called a purely natural ethic says to the penitent, 'Make a new start and let the past take care of itself. Bygone errors must be allowed to sleep in silence, whilst you turn your steps to better things.' The two parts of the message cancel each other, since the future cannot be better than the past if the conscience is forbidden to occupy itself with the wrong already done. Such counsel is suicidal, for it seeks to benumb the functions of an active conscience rather than to stimulate and restore. The method of dealing with sin prescribed by some of our teachers bears a close analogy to the repudiation of State debts advocated by unscrupulous revolutionaries, and is closely allied to it in morals. A State rarely repudiates its debts, not only because an entire loss of credit follows such a transaction, but the sense of integrity in its own citizens is hereby imperilled, if not destroyed. It would end in the victory of every base passion, and the suppression of all virtue, if every evil man had the power of calling for an act of indemnity in his own favour whenever his circumstances might require it. The place of conscience in human life is destroyed if we are free to say at any period suiting our pleasure or convenience, we will make a new start, and as to the sins of the past we will no longer trouble about them. The issues with which our moral sense concerns itself are predominant in their importance, and the moral sense is stultified and attenuated by all systems which make sin of little or no significance in human life.

How Tolstoy felt about the sins of the past we see by what he wrote of his life as a young man: 'It is grievous to me, in my egotism, to have lived my life bestially, and to know that now it cannot be retrieved. Grievous, chiefly, because people will say: "It is all very well for you, a dying old man, to say this; but you did not live so! We too, when we are old, will say the same." That is where the chief punishment of sin lies: in feeling that one is an unworthy vessel for the

[1] *We Moderns*, 84.

transmission of the will of God—befouled and spoilt.' [1]

Listen to a greater than Tolstoy. This is Myers' version of St. Paul's attitude to the past:

Saints, did I say? with your remembered faces,
Dear men and women, whom I sought and slew!
Ah when we mingle in the heavenly places
How will I weep to Stephen and to you!

Oh the regret, the struggle and the failing!
Oh the days desolate and useless years!
Vows in the night, so fierce and unavailing!
Stings of my shame and passion of my tears! [2]

2. But, again, if a man thinks that he can in any sense undo the past and deliver himself from the toils of its misdoings, he is already the victim of a self-complacency which is fatal to acute moral sensibility. The Jewish system itself, in spite of its superhuman authority, was demoralizing to the worshipper who looked upon its expiations as final, rather than as symbols of a Divine redemption yet to be known. The fulfilment of the ritual conditions was to a great extent within his own power. He could buy the victim at a cost which was not ruinous, and he could lead it into the temple courts. But the market price of an offering from the stall or the field could not be put into the scale against a moral wrong without debasing the standard of character. If the blood of bulls and goats could indeed take away sin, sin was not the portentous offence assumed by the prophets and lawgivers of the past, and the testimony of the conscience itself was exaggerated and untrustworthy. It was this idea, that offences could be redeemed by fines, which led the prophets in the days of the Jewish decadence to inveigh so strongly against the later developments and interpretations of the Levitical ritual. He whose throne was established from of old within the conscience was dishonoured by the prevailing belief that a trespass was sufficiently dealt with when an inferior life had been placed upon the altar. And even when those practical counsels of amendment and restitution preached by the prophets had been heartily fulfilled, the problem of sin was not solved, and superhuman grace had to deal with the predominant factor in it. God had to reserve to Himself its complete expiation, to save the sinner from that self-complacency which always deadens the function of the conscience. If a man assumes that he can undo his own sin and make good its ill-effects to all who may have suffered from it, he will go on sinning without compunction just as long as he feels inclined.

'The grimmest fact in all the history of the world is this fact of sin. The history of humanity is mainly the history of sin. It has dug the grave for empires and civilization in the past; it is digging the grave of empires to-day. Stand amid the ruins of great capital cities, now briar-heaps—in Tyre, or Carthage, or Babylon—or amid the vestiges of the glory that was Greece—and ask what worked this woe? And the only answer is sin. To-day the might of sin has ravaged the world, and swept well-nigh the whole of humanity into a maelstrom of blood. It has strewn the streets of every city in the world with the wreckage of broken, shattered lives. The horrors of peace are more awful than even the horrors of war. (It is more dangerous to be a child in the slums of London or Glasgow than to be a soldier in the trenches in Flanders). It has turned even the gospel of love into that loathsome Pharisaism that knows not the canker from which the heart is perishing. As the soul contemplates this dread and unconquered foe, despair falls upon it. This is a problem that demands the intervention of God. It is to this warfare that God called His sons. It is vain to conquer the enemy without if the nation fall into the clutches of degeneration within. It is for this warfare that every soldier who would serve and save his race and the world must gird himself. It is a warfare harder far than that against flesh and blood, and in it there is no discharge. God alone can win the victory in this age-long fight. But God cannot win it unless we enlist and fight under His banner. It is great to die for England; it is greater far to live for England—and for the world. The only way of living for the world is to fight sin.' [1]

3. The religion which perfects the conscience must set it free from pain and bring to it healing and unbroken rest. No sense or organ of the

[1] A. Maude, *The Life of Tolstoi*, 402.
[2] F. W. H. Myers, *St. Paul.*

[1] N. Maclean and J. R. P. Sclater, *God and the Soldier*, 71.

physical life can reach its right development if pressed by conditions which irritate and distress. The racking agony must be alleviated before progress can begin. The child whose life is one long, inward torture can scarcely hope to be a giant. It will be a wonder if he survive at all. It is the province of both physical and moral pain to localize any hurtful influence at work in body or soul and thus make healing possible.

Every instructor of the young and every employer knows that where something is weighing upon the conscience there will be such listlessness and inattention that good work cannot be done, or if there is for the moment a feverish energy which is intended to produce forgetfulness, recklessness and reaction are sure to follow. The living God cannot be served aright unless the conscience is cleansed and healed of all the distresses of the past. The sunshine stimulates respiration, and men only half live in the night-time and on dark and cloudy days. The glooms of condemnation must pass from the conscience, and the sunshine of God's favour shine clear and unclouded if the soul is to expand into its true grandeur. The diseased, self-tormenting moral sense must be healed or a man cannot rise to the full measure of his own capacity and do his providential work.

To sound the note of alarm and compel us to halt when danger threatens is not the only function of the nervous system. Its senses are the gateways through which all the gladness of the outward world conveys itself to us and adds to our joy in living. And the sensibility which takes its rise in conscience and like a fine nervous tissue invests all our faculties and all our movements is meant, not only to admonish us when we go astray and put ourselves in danger, but to minister the blessedness of God to our spirits. A joy distils itself through a healed and an approving conscience, more ethereal in its quality not only than that which is conveyed through healthy natural senses, but even than the higher joy ministered by the affections. It is only when the hurt of the conscience is healed by the Cross that the conscience is perfected and the highest joy of living is felt.

The Blood of Christ.

Heb ix. 13, 14.—'For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

'THE blood of Christ.' How often the Bible speaks of that, how frequent are the references to it in our hymns and prayers! No one can possibly be an instructed Christian who does not understand something of what is meant. Yet there are many who go on using this language year after year without attaching to it any intelligible meaning.

1. Now in the language of the Bible and of the Church, the blood stands for the life. We ourselves sometimes speak in a similar way. We speak of our soldiers shedding their blood for their country, or as giving their lives for their country, and in both cases we mean much the same thing. But the Hebrews of old went further than this, and thought that the life of a man or of an animal was actually contained in the blood. That is why they spoke of the blood of a murdered man as crying for vengeance from the ground, and why the blood of their sacrifices was poured out at the altar. What they meant to offer there was not just the blood, but the life which they thought of as contained in it. Fix it, then, in your minds that the blood of Christ means the life of Christ given for us, and that, when we say that the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin, we mean that His life given for us does this.

But then what is life? What a mystery it is! Think of the soldier as he leaps out of the trench full of energy and courage. And then in a moment a bullet passes through his brain, and he lies dead. Life, we say, has departed. But what is life? What exactly is it that has departed? There is no one yet who can tell us that. But this, at any rate, we know. Life is the greatest thing in the world, as well as the most mysterious. It is this life which in some way preserves the body from decay. The great proof that life has departed is that decay has begun. It is this life which fights against disease, when disease attacks

the body, and seeks to cast it out. It is this life, again, which is necessary for growth in the child and in the plant. We delight to see our children, as we say, full of life. When we are weak and depressed, we say that what we really need is something to put life into us. Yes; life is the great need. As Tennyson says—

> 'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant;
> Oh! life, not death, for which we pant;
> More life, and fuller, that I want.

And, if what is true of the body is true of every part of us, our Lord Jesus Christ never used words more precious to us than when He said, 'I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.'

You see, then, that when we speak of the blood of Christ, what we really mean is the life of Christ; and that what we need, if we are to be cleansed from dead works to serve the living God, is to have the life of Christ imparted to us. Not for a moment do we forget the Lord's death. But what chiefly makes the Lord's death of value to us is surely that, because He gave His life for us at Calvary, He can impart His life to us now. Joseph became the saviour of his family by suffering cruelty and injustice at their hands, not because his suffering in itself was of any benefit to them, but because it was through his suffering that he reached the great position in which he possessed the power to save. So it is, we believe, with our Lord Jesus Christ. It is because He has suffered cruelty, injustice, torture and death at the hands of the world, that He has reached the position from which He is able to save the world. But what He gives is something far higher than anything which Joseph could give. Our Lord offers us His own life, the life which made Him what He was, He offers it that it may enter into us, and cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

2. Dead works are the opposite of living works. They are the works which have no Divine life in them. They are the acts of one who, having separated himself from God, either wholly or in the particular instance, cannot please Him, and whose best works, while he is so, 'have the nature of sin.' And these dead works are represented as lying upon the conscience, dragging it down and defiling it, so that there is no freedom in the life within, no conscious and peaceful intercourse between the soul and God, no strength for service because no release from guilt. For such a state the remedy here mentioned is the only medicine. 'The blood of Christ shall purify our conscience from dead works to serve'—and the expression indicates the nature of that service; the service of a priest, dedicating his life, and every act of that life, to Him whose he is—'to serve a living God.' Believe that Christ died for you; believe that by that death He put away sin, even your sin; and in the strength of that faith dismiss the irrevocable past, and turn to the available future. By one act, or by repeated acts, of self-dedication to God, take up the priestly office, whoever you are, however humble, however sinful, and exercise that office in the discharge, as unto God, of all the various functions of your common calling. 'To whom coming, ye also are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.'

The Sacrifice of Christ.

Heb. ix. 14.—'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.'

THE writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews finds the distinctive character of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in four points. First, it was an offering of a person—it was self-sacrifice: He 'offered himself unto God.' Secondly, the person was blameless: He 'offered himself without a spot or blemish.' Thirdly, it was a spiritual sacrifice: spirit was the sphere in which He offered Himself—in spirit. And, lastly, the spirit in which He offered Himself was 'the eternal spirit.'

1. First, then, He offered Himself, His person, His human life to God. This human life of ours is meant to move out in various directions. It moves out to the interpretation and appropriation of nature, and so man gains in natural knowledge, and advances in the resources of civilization. It moves out again from each man toward his fellow, and so the bonds of humanity are knit and society develops. It moves out also towards God, to

present itself simply before Him, and to enter into communion with Him. All the faculties of man are to be directed, not only towards Nature, not only towards his fellow-men, but also deliberately God-ward, and that first of all. This is the first and great commandment. All the material which life affords is to be used not only as a means of progress, or as an instrument for social intercourse: it is also in all its parts to be converted into a free-will offering, in which man presents himself before the face of God in conscious and rational homage. This was the original fundamental law of man's being; this is the ultimate goal in Christianity. 'I beseech you, brethren,' writes St. Paul, 'by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.' That is the law, the principle, of your being, and this reasonable service it is which is for us supremely exemplified in the human life of Jesus. That life looked man-ward, in loving ministry: 'He went about doing good.' But first of all it looked God-ward in self-oblation: 'Lo, I come to do thy will.' Even before 'Thy will be done' comes 'Thy name be hallowed'; for to please God, to present himself before God —this is the highest privilege, and this is also the primary duty, of rational man.

Foolishly, narrowly, men sometimes suggest that seriously to take thought of God, to occupy ourselves in seeking the face of God, and knowing and studying to know God, is to divert the faculties, without profit, from the really useful end of human improvement.

> Presume not God to scan;
> The proper study for mankind is man.

What a shallow philosophy! For why, in fact, is it that we make little social improvement? Why are we so falsely, so ignobly, tolerant of injustice and selfishness and lust, in society and in ourselves? And why are the efforts for the good of man so seldom persevered in through disappointment, or so frequently allowed to degenerate into effortless routine? Why? In a word, it is because we do not think enough about God. If we constantly and systematically gazed up at Him and let His inexorable holiness, His truth, His beauty, His love—more than all, the claim of His Fatherhood on us His sons—have upon us the influence which it ought to have, penetrating into our whole being, we should be beyond all question more vigorous and persevering in moral efforts—ay, and more successful. It was the Apostles, who were so full of the vision of God, who were able to 'turn the world upside down.'

2. Secondly, He offered Himself without spot or blemish. The metaphor is from the inspection of the victim prepared for sacrifice. In the Lamb of God the scrutiny of the All-Seeing Eye can detect no disqualifying flaw. The sinlessness of Jesus is a fact no less contrary to our experience of humanity than is His miraculous mode of entrance into our mortal life or His exit from it. Everywhere in human nature, when you inspect it at all narrowly, you discern the fact of sin. It is what baffles the philanthropist and sometimes turns him into a cynic. It embitters and enfeebles our own inner lives. It may be selfishness, or avarice, or lust, or impatience, or untrustworthiness, or presumption, or hopelessness, or want of love, or want of faith. It is in part inherited and in part due to the personal misuse of our own powers. It varies in degree and character from man to man, from society to society, from age to age; but everywhere it is a present experience, and everywhere, as it impoverishes and disorders human life, so, when the soul becomes enlightened to the true holiness of God, it makes men tremble, like Felix, at the bare mention of 'righteousness and judgment to come.' It disqualifies men altogether for approaching God. But in our Lord there was the fullness of human faculty, coupled with the absence of any moral defect or moral deficiency, a will always vigorous, unflagging, an intellect wholly unclouded and unsophisticated, of perfect receptivity and exquisite penetration; a heart of incomparable tenderness and force, which yet never moved out in uncontrolled passion or emotion; a perfect humanity, which yet showed its imperfection in unresisting dependence upon the movements of the Divine Spirit which filled and directed it, a humanity rich and full in experience, passing through all sorts of vicissitudes, yet found as perfect in failure as in success, a humanity in which nothing approaching to moral decadence is to be detected, as glorious in its issue as in its inception. He offered Himself to God without blemish. He filled at large the ideal of humanity. He was the

beloved Son in whom the Father—'the Great Scrutiniser,' so early writers called Him—the great Scrutiniser of human oblation, was well pleased.

3. The sacrifice of Jesus was a full, perfect, adequate self-oblation of man to God. This is, in other words, to say that it was perfectly spiritual. He offered Himself in spirit. We have a crudely false notion that what is spiritual in our humanity is opposed to what is material or visible, that what is visible and tangible cannot be spiritual. Never is such a notion countenanced in the New Testament. The spiritual is indeed opposed to the carnal and the formal; for the word 'carnal' expresses the disordered state of things in which the higher part of our nature is ruled by the lower; and 'formal' is used to describe a course of action in which the will and intelligence are not really enlisted at all; while 'spiritual' is used for every action in which the will and intellect are truly at work, the intelligence truly recognizing the Divine presence and purpose in the circumstances of a particular case, and the will truly, energetically, carrying out the Divine law. That is spiritual in our humanity which expresses in our creation, in the wholeness of our nature, the will and mind of God the eternal Spirit. This is worship 'in spirit and in truth,' the worship which our Lord declares acceptable; it is worship in which the intelligence recognizes God, which directs towards Him in humble adoration the whole being. Sacrifice is spiritual which, like the sacrifice of Jesus, is expressed in the body—for it was an offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all—but which carries with it an act of real homage on the part of the intelligence and of the will. There is something spiritual in all human habits of sacrifice. The spirituality of the Jewish system in all its parts lay in the rightness of its direction. It was a system under which the Divine education in the crude Semitic habit of sacrifice was gradually organized and spiritualized.

The Divine character, the Divine education of the Jew pointed on to Jesus in whom it was fulfilled. This sacrifice was, as much as their own had been, material, visible, objective. As He hangs upon the Cross, He fills in the Christian imagination that sort of central place, as in a great spectacle, which only an outward visible enactment of sacrifice could have filled. But His sacrifice is supremely spiritual. Its whole moral meaning lies in the obedience it involved. He was obedient. He, the pattern man, gave to God undivided allegiance, an absolute homage. When His action on behalf of truth and meekness and righteousness involved the martyr's death, He accepted the conditions and offered the shedding of His blood; but in God's sight the shedding of the blood of Jesus had no value except as the symbol of an obedience carried to the extreme. This is the teaching, emphatic and plain enough, of the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the sacrifice of our Lord is put, just in this respect, in strong contrast to the sacrifice of the Law. 'It it not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared for me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.' It is a great, a strange, mistake to suppose that the death of Christ was, as it were, the act of God. It was the act in which, on the contrary, rebellion against God, the sin of man, showed itself in its true and horrible colour. What God does in the matter is to bear with it. He spares not His only Son. He exempts Him by no miracle from the consequences of His loyalty to truth and meekness and righteousness. God foresees and forbears with this, and He over-rules it to the purposes of our redemption. But throughout, as St. Anselm says in the most famous of treatises on the doctrine of the Atonement, 'What God the Father enjoined upon the incarnate Son was perfect obedience. Only because obedience involved death, then secondarily did He enjoin to die.' The sacrifice of our Lord is perfectly spiritual, but the action carries with it, in all its silent implication, and in the application of the words in which it finds

expression, the perfect, the fullest truth about God and about Himself, as also the perfect and fullest homage of the self-surrender of the will.

4. Once more, the sacrifice of Jesus was perfectly spiritual, and it was offered, not only in the power of the human spirit, but in the power of the eternal spirit. 'He through the eternal spirit' (or, 'He in the eternal spirit') 'offered himself unto God.' It is doubtful whether this refers exactly to the Holy Spirit indwelling and inspiring, as He undoubtedly did, the humanity of Jesus Christ, or to the eternal nature of the Son. What is taught is that Christ's act and sacrifice was not only human but Divine. The spirit expressed in it was not temporary, changeable, created, but eternal, not man's only, but God's, and the eternal spirit was working in the manhood, in the sacrifice of Christ. The meaning and value of the act is unchangeable. It is true of all human action that at its best it has an eternal element in it; but the eternal element, the movement of God which lies hid at all times at the root of humanity, is obscured and clouded by human independence of God—that is, human sin. He who was acting under human conditions was from God, and the Divine spirit dwelt in Him perfectly. Nothing in the act of sacrifice of Jesus is merely temporary, or imperfect, or inadequate. Jesus could plead the out-poured blood as a blood of sprinkling, an accepted sacrifice, even before His death, at the institution of the Eucharist: 'This is my blood which is shed'—poured out—'for you.'

No Blood No Blessing.

Heb. ix. 22.—'Without shedding of blood is no remission.'

THERE is not only no remission of sin, but nothing—no mighty result, no achievement, no triumph. Every worthy deed costs something; no high thing can be done easily. No great thing can be accomplished without the shedding of blood. Life is just our chance of making this great and strange discovery. Many of us never make it. We begin by trifling, by working with a fraction of our strength. We soon see that nothing comes of that. At last, if we are wise, we see that all the strength is needed. What have we besides this? We must disrobe ourselves. We do it; yet our object remains ungained. What more have we to give? We have our blood. So at last the blood is shed, the life is parted with, and the goal is reached. We are happy if we know that everything noble and enduring in this world is accomplished by the shedding of blood, not merely the concentration of the heart and soul and mind on one object, but the pruning and even the maiming of life.

Dr. Adam Clarke, in his address at the foundation of the London Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1916, made special reference to the Moravians. He told his hearers how, when the Moravians were only six hundred in number, they had missionaries all over the world. The beginning was in this wise. A negro named Anthony came from St. Thomas, and passed under the influence of Zinzendorf. He said that his fellow-slaves were seeking a missionary to declare to them the true God, but the missionary could find entrance only if he went as a slave. Two brethren, Leonard Dober and Tobias Leopold, immediately offered themselves, and expressed their willingness to be sold as slaves that they might preach Christ. We may be sure, whether we are aware of the facts or not, that no life that brings fruit to God is without its Gethsemane, its parting with life, its shedding, as it were, great drops of blood. But, as the Saviour's blood fell on the cursed ground and blessed it, so the blood of the surrendered soul makes Gethsemane a garden. If not now, then hereafter; sooner or later the time must come.

1. Without shedding of blood there is no blessing. What is meant by the word 'bless'? It is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word for blood. We may legitimately translate this by saying that before we can truly bless another human being we must shed our blood for him. You can lighten a brother's way by cups of cold water, by small gifts, by smiles, by friendly words, and these things are great in the eyes of Christ. But to bless in the superlative degree we must part with life. Without shedding of blood it cannot be. And the primitive religions everywhere bear the same witness. It was thought that a life had to be buried in the seed-ground before there could be a harvest. The old legend of Copenhagen tells us that its founders failed again and again. Their work was destroyed by the sea, till at last a human life was sacrificed, and the city became

stable. We might quote from the Greek tragedians, whose theology is a deep theology, to the same effect. However crude, however distorted, these notions might be, they all pointed men onwards to the supreme Altar of the universe where Jesus died, 'the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.'

2. Blessing comes from blood-shedding; that is, our power to bless in the highest sense comes from our shedding, as it were, great drops of blood. We need not shed them literally, though the Church has justly placed the martyrs first. The Church of Rome never prays for the martyrs, but makes request for their prayers. The martyrs it sees before Christ in robes of crimson, and the saints in white. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. We cannot atone, but we can bless. We cannot have a share in the one perfect Oblation, the Evening Sacrifice of the world, but we fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ. Of every great servant of Christ it is true that the Lord says, 'I will shew him how great things he must *suffer* for my name's sake.' It would not be right to say that it is the suffering that counts, and not the labour. What is true is that the labour without the suffering does not count, that the two in a fruitful life are indissolubly joined. We are familiar with the great passage in which the Apostle is driven to use the awful language of the Passion, where he says, 'I am crucified with Christ'; 'I die daily.' And it is true that all along the way there are sacrifice and blood-shedding. But is it equally true that there is but one great Gethsemane in the lives of Christ's blessed servants. Many have none, and their work comes to little, but the elect have one that stands above all, one shedding of blood, one death, after which the rest seems easy.

Can we know the Gethsemane of another? Not often. It is passed, as a rule, with little sign or show. When George Howe, in *The Bonnie Brier Bush*, came home to die, his mother hid herself beneath the laburnum to see his face as the cart stood beside the stile. It told her plainly what she had feared, and Marget passed through her Gethsemane with the gold blossoms falling on her face. You may be passing through yours now, and there is little to show it—some absence of manner, some twitching of the lips, but no more; and you will never tell anyone of it, and no one may discover it even after you are dead.

Oh ye, all ye, who suffer here below,
Schooled in the baffling mystery of pain,
Who on life's anvil bear the fateful strain,
Wrung as forged iron, hammered blow on blow.
Take counsel with your grief, in that you know,
That he who suffers suffers not in vain,
Nay, that it shall be for the whole world's gain,
And wisdom prove the priceless price of woe.

Thus in some new-found land where no man's feet
Have trod a path, bold voyagers astray
May fall foredone by torturing thirst and heat:
But, from the impotent body of defeat,
The winners spring who carve a conquering way,
Measured by milestones of their perished clay.[1]

Christ Appearing.

Heb. ix. 26.—'Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared.'

Heb. ix. 24.—'Now to appear in the presence of God for us.'

Heb. ix. 28.—'Unto them that look for him shall he appear.'

THREE 'appearings' of Jesus Christ are mentioned in these verses, each denoting a clear and distinct stage in His redemptive work. In verse 26 we read: 'Once in the end of the ages hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.' Such is the summary of His work in the past. Those words mark a chapter in our Lord's history which is closed for ever—a chapter of humiliation and shame and suffering and death. He 'became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.' Linked to that circle of past redemptive work is the circle of His present work for us 'within the veil.' In verse 24 we read that Christ is entered 'into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' His humiliation has been followed by His exaltation; His earthly sufferings have led on to His heavenly glory. As He appeared on earth in the past for man's salvation, so now for man's salvation He appears in heaven before the face of God. Then follows another 'appearing.' As we looked from the past to the present, so now we look from the present

[1] Mathilde Blind, *Poems*, 132.

to the future. The third circle of the Redeemer's work comes into view; the scene is shifted once more from heaven to earth, and we are assured that 'unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, apart from sin unto salvation' (v. 28).

It is true that three different words are used in the Greek instead of the single term employed by our English translators. The word used to describe His appearance on earth at His Incarnation suggests to us the truth that He was made manifest to the world by the Father; it regards the vision of Christ from the side of God, who revealed Him to the sinning sons of men. Of His present appearing in heaven a word is used which teaches us that Christ has clearly and openly presented Himself before the throne of the Most High, that the eye of God may rest upon Him. And then with reference to His final appearing on earth again a simpler word is adopted, which conveys only the thought of His visibility to the world; it announces a vision of Christ regarded from the side of man who sees, rather than from the side of God who reveals. 'They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory' (Mt. xxiv. 30); 'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him' (Rev. i. 7). All this is very interesting to Bible students, the very words chosen by sacred writers presenting clear and definite conceptions of the work of our blessed Lord. But it is not necessary to go quite so deeply into the subject at the present time. It will be enough for us to notice that the work of our Redeemer is divided into three distinct stages—that He has appeared on earth, does appear in heaven, and will appear visibly and openly on earth again; and that He is the central figure in each sphere and chapter of the whole redemptive work of grace.

Now as we look at those three appearings of the Lord Jesus Christ, we notice that they have to do with three aspects of sin. In the 26th verse, He once appeared, in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself—or, as we may translate it, to disannul sin, to break the condemning power of sin; so that, for those who use His first appearing, the condemning power of sin is broken and gone, and 'there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' He is appearing now in the presence of God, to break the constraining power and the compelling power of sin; so that, for those who trust in Him and walk with Him, 'sin shall not have dominion over' them. And He is coming again to break and to destroy the continuing power of sin. When He comes again it shall be 'without sin.' Every question of sin, its very presence, shall be gone from those who are His people.

Again look at this threefold appearing of Christ, and you see that it is to give us three sets of blessings. We know, every one of us that are in Christ Jesus, that His first appearing was designed to give us pardon and peace with God. We ought to know that His present appearing is for the purpose of supplying to us His preserving grace and His purifying power. And we may know, if we will, that His last appearing will bring us His perfecting power: 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

1. Jesus has appeared here in the world. He has actually put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The Divine justice has been satisfied. God can now be just and the Justifier of him who believes in Jesus. And it only remains that we shall lay our hand on the head of the Sacrifice—that we shall stretch forth the hand of faith and touch Christ, thereby identifying ourselves with Him, and the putting away of sin will then be true for us. Its guilt will be put away at once, and its presence put away more and more through the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in our nature.

2. He has gone to appear in the presence of God for us. Yes; it was not for His own sake that He entered heaven. As the high priest wore in his ministrations the sacred breastplate, on which were graven the names of the twelve tribes of his nation, and as he entered the sanctuary carrying the names of the children of Israel 'upon his heart' before the Lord (Ex. xxviii. 29), so in a truer sense Jesus has carried our names upon His heart into the unveiled presence of the Holy One. Once pierced on earth for human sin, He now pleads for man above. The needs of His blood-bought Church lie upon the heart of the ascended Christ. It was to redeem us that He appeared on earth; it is to represent us that He appears in heaven.

3. If we belong to Christ it is our duty and

privilege to look, not for death, but for our Lord's return. Generation after generation have expected that return, and have passed away without seeing it. But they were right in expecting their Lord. They were obeying the plain command, 'Let your loins be girt and your lamps burning, and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their Lord.' And such an attitude of expectation proved to be a real help towards an earnest, separate, triumphant life. Many a home experiences a blessed quickening of love and joy because Christmas is near. Even so the belief that the second appearing of our Lord is near at hand is a strong quickening and purifying influence. 'Every man,' said St. John—mark the universality of the law—'every man that hath this hope set on him, purifieth himself even as he is pure.'

'Laid Up.'

Heb. ix. 27.—'It is laid up for men once to die' (RVm).

There is a word which is used in the original of the New Testament four times only, by different writers, and in different connections. It would be absurd to pretend that there exists any designed link between the passages. But since the word means to 'store up,' to 'lay by deliberately,' and since all four verses refer to the future fate of man, it is curiously suggestive to look at them side by side. We are at liberty to learn by such comparison of spiritual things with spiritual, so long as we do not forget that only we ourselves have brought them thus together. What, then, does Scripture speak of as kept in store?

1. In Heb. ix. 27 we read this, 'It is laid up for men once to die, and after this cometh judgment.' The thought of death as deliberately laid up for man is not the first that occurs to one. We think of death as the failure and running short of what is arranged, the wearing out of the machine, rather than as itself a part of the plan. Nature calls that a deficiency, which revelation declares to be designed. Yet, even in the lower view, the thought of death is very sobering. Through fear of it, says the Apostle, men are all their life subject to bondage.

2. St. Paul gives thanks for his Colossian Church 'because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens' (i. 5). The word 'hope' is ambiguous. Sometimes it is an emotion, but sometimes the cause of the emotion, as when we say that the hope of a beleagured city is in its ramparts, or in a relieving force. The latter is clearly the meaning here, since the hope spoken of is not in the bosom of the Church, but is kept in store for us in heaven. The hope of the Christian is not a surmise, a guess; it awaits him; it is kept in store.

3. In Luke xix. 20 we read, 'Here is thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin.' From the beginning, the religion of Jesus has denounced the notion, dear to man, that heaven may be earned as a matter of account, starting with so much endowment, wasting none, and therefore open to no blame. St. Paul tells us that God by His law designedly shut us all up under sin (convicted us), that He might have mercy upon all. But the tendency recurs; human nature and evil prompters from beneath urge us to calculate, 'Surely I am not very unworthy of salvation.'

But this is to renounce Christ, who was not sent but unto lost sheep, and came not to call the righteous, but to seek and to save the lost. What is the meaning of His very name 'Jesus,' and of the great word 'salvation'? To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned as a favour, but as a debt; and how great is the audacity which says, 'Because I have spent innocently my brief existence here, I claim as a right to share for all eternity the very home of God'! St. Paul was blameless concerning the letter of the righteousness of the law, yet he despaired, he died, as soon as that same law inspired in him a loftier and more spiritual ideal.

4. Of all who laboured and triumphed for Christ, the great Apostle Paul is foremost—profound thinker, marvellous missionary, lion-hearted martyr of the Cross. And now, when his haven is in sight, though the waves are roaring at the bar, he utters the same word—not, however, of anything which he has himself treasured up, but of what the Lord has safe in store for him: 'There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day' (2 Tim. iv. 8). St. Paul worked mightily because he thought not of a

grasping Master, quick to misjudge, but trusted the Supreme Heart which had already prepared his prize. And his best reward, like that of all Christian souls, was not a crown of laurels or of gems, but of righteousness. This, he says, the Lord shall give to all who love Him. Love, therefore, is the true path to righteousness. Love is diligent and loyal. Love is the fulfilling of the law.

Preparation for Death.

Heb. ix. 27.—'It is appointed unto men once to die.'

It is certain that we shall die; and in death we shall be, each of us, alone. We may have friends around our bedside, doing all that love and grief can do to alleviate pain and to assure us of the tenderest human sympathy; friends who may accompany us up to the very gate of death, but from whom we must part at last. In the last mental act by which man, driven back upon the centre of his being, takes leave of this world of sense and time, and parts by a wrench from the body which has, from the first moment of existence, been at once the envelope and the instrument of his real self, he will be alone. None other can enter into that tremendous experience which awaits us all; when one world disappears from sight, and another, so unimaginable to us now, so magnificent, so awful, opens upon it. Pascal's saying, 'I shall be alone in death,' is one of the most useful that a man can keep in his memory. To prepare for death, then, is the true work, the common sense of life. And how we are to set about it? There are four main lines of such preparation.

1. There is the discipline of *resignation*. Death will be a sentence against which no appeal can be heard. It may seem hard to part with so many friends, so many interests, so much work, so many hopes and enthusiasms. But there is no help for it. And it is better for our own sakes, and still more for the honour of God, to bow to the inevitable. The great laws by which God governs the universe will not, we may take it for granted, be repealed in our favour; we have but to acknowledge and to submit to them, or rather, to Him whose rules of work they are. After all, we are in the hands, not of a dead unfeeling force, but of a most tender Father whom we may well trust. And we prepare for this last act of self-resignation to Him by many previous acts of resignation, by readily, joyfully yielding up our wills, when we have to suffer what we do not like; by treating each personal annoyance, each failure, each illness, each loss of friends or means, as a step in that training which is wholesome for men who have to die, and who should learn to say in prospect of the last agony, 'Not my will, but thine, be done.'

2. There is the discipline of *repentance*. Resignation is difficult, death is formidable only because our conscience, as well as our creed, assures us that death will be followed by judgment. And judgment is a dreadful anticipation for a sinner. 'The sting of death,' says St. Paul, 'is sin.' To appear before God, laden with that which is a contradiction of His nature, which He hates and will punish, not out of any personal vindictiveness, but because He cannot lay aside His unalterable sanctity and justice—this is, indeed, a prospect from which the stoutest heart might shrink. 'I don't mind the pain of dying,' it was once said; 'but I cannot bear to think of the face of the Judge.' And yet this need not be; in a Christian's case it ought not to be. For 'there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit'; and if we Christians 'confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Only, the work of repentance, to be deep and real, must be lifelong. Day by day the Christian must deplore all in the past that has separated him from God. Day by day he must form and strengthen resolutions against sin, against relapse, against temptation. Day by day he must plead the merits of the Divine Victim who was crucified for sinners, and whose blood, as being that of the Everlasting Son of God, 'cleanseth us from all sin.'

3. Thirdly, there is the discipline of *prayer*, or, to speak more accurately, of worship. No doubt worship is a means of grace. It puts us in possession of spiritual powers otherwise unattainable, so far as we know. It has wider results when it takes the energetic forms of supplication and intercession, and asks and receives blessings, temporal and spiritual, from the Source of all good. But,

apart from these possible effects, an act of worship is of itself a training for our life beyond the grave, and for the great change which leads to it. In sincere worship we shut out the things and thoughts of sense and time, we cleanse the inner temple of the tables of the money-changers, and of the seats of them that sell doves; we cleanse it, if need be, by a stern effort of the will. When we enter thus in spirit within the veil, and behold the realities over which death has no power, and which have no relation to time—the everlasting throne, the unending intercession, the countless intelligences who worship and who serve, their ceaseless and consummate activity, which is a perpetual rest—we are not only insensibly suffused with the light which streams from that other world, we learn how to behave ourselves in that majestic Presence. We learn the manners of another clime, the habits of a higher society. Thus worship is a training for death. Each sincere act of worship involves that self-detachment from the world which will be a necessity for the dying; each sincere act of worship trains the soul to gaze beforehand on the sights and sounds which will burst on it, in all their awe and beauty, as it crosses the threshold of Eternity.

4. Finally, there is the discipline of *voluntary sacrifice*. By sacrifice man does not merely await death; he goes out to meet, almost to welcome, it. He learns how to transfigure a stern necessity into the sublimest of virtues. His life is not simply to be taken from him; he will offer it to God. For each true act of sacrifice, each surrender of self, whether in will or in act, carries with it the implied power of controlling the whole being, not merely on ordinary occasions, but at the crisis and the trial-time of destiny. Those small and secret self-conquests which make up the daily life of a serious Christian, which seem to achieve so little, are yet of incalculable value. Each is a step in the greatest of all the disciplines which prepare for death. As our Lord, from His earliest years, looked on to that entire offering of His human will which was perfected on the Cross, so must the Christian, by many a free surrender of that which he desires or loves, prepare himself for the last great act which awaits him, that he may be able to say after the Divine Redeemer, 'Into thy hands I commend my spirit'; while he adds, as becomes a sinner, 'for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth.'

The Judgment after Death.

Heb. ix. 27.—'After this the judgment.'

WHAT would a judgment after death mean?

1. The religious imagination has not been very illuminating on this subject. The pictures of the judgment after death seem to assume that it is necessary for some reward or punishment to be attached to the merit or demerit of our lives. But surely a spiritual estimate of things shows quite clearly that we carry these with us, that they already operate within this life infallibly and automatically. They are germinal in every act, they register in all our thoughts; whether men know it or not, judgment is always proceeding, our sins contain their own punishment and our virtues are their own reward. But it will also be recognized that there is some necessity, if judgment is to fulfil a function worthy of the love and wisdom of God, that the person should be able to perceive that judgment has taken place. Even in physical penalties this is frequently not the case, and in spiritual penalties it is of their very essence that they are not recognized. There must be an awakening to self-knowledge, there must be an acceptance of judgment and a recognition of its meaning, if it is to have any effect at all. It might be held, however, that it is part of the penalty that the punishment should be unconscious, as it certainly seems to be part of the reward that saintliness should be unaware that any reward is deserved. This would mean that sin actually produces unconsciousness in the soul, that is, that its end is personal extinction. It is difficult to believe that God or man could be content with such a judgment. It may be that the judgment of death operates in two ways: it brings home to us the fact that judgment has been taking place, and it saves that judgment from becoming a slow, unconscious, automatic death. If there is any justice at all, we ought at least to feel the pains which we have inflicted upon others: if we are to advance into a higher life we must first be awakened to a higher moral consciousness; and it is difficult to see how this can be accomplished without pain. When the feeling creeps

back to a cramped limb it causes pain at first, but no pain would be a sign that atrophy had set in. It is only the idea that the pain must be endless and uneducative that has done so much harm to this idea. But we must not react to the equally non-moral conception that progress in the other world is to be automatic and mechanical, and therefore painless. That is a deduction from a quite false picture of moral evolution as it takes place in the present life.

2. Death itself might be a means to the starting of such a process of judgment. The change to a spiritual existence would certainly find many of us the poorer. If in the other world vision and contact are not physical but dependent upon spiritual organs and spiritual affinities, how very friendless that life will find some of us to be. Then there will be brought home to us the effect of all our antipathies, our shirking of fellowship, our contentment with sundering quarrels and misunderstandings. It is possible that the dropping of the veil of flesh will also mean the dropping of the veil which so conveniently hides the truth from us. The flesh does enable us to drug and debauch our minds, to seek oblivion in sleep; the passing of all this must make a difference. There truth will be the one possession of the mind, goodness the one possession of the soul. That will mean that some of us will be poor and naked, and in a flash there will be revealed the folly and waste of our earthly life. With conscience alive and able now to enforce attention, there will be nothing to save many of us from pain and shame.

It might be thought that the dropping of the flesh would of itself admit each of us to the celestial happiness; for that would carry with it the passing of the opportunity and occasion of sin. It need not be pointed out that, from the Christian point of view, this is to be reckoned one of the deadly heresies, but there is also rational support for this estimate of the notion. If the flesh is the occasion of sin, it is also very often the hindrance of sin. The penalty resident in our flesh against sensuality, the exhaustion which pulls up the most rebellious, the prohibition to excess, may all pass with the passing of our incarnate conditions. Then there will be nothing between us and the bottomless depths.

3. From what we can see of death, even from this side, it seems likely that some such effects can be safely predicted. What a difference the approach of death makes to many careless and rebellious souls. Balance of mind, clearness of conscience, penetration of vision, begin to manifest themselves. The memory is abnormally stirred, the deeper psychical life comes to the surface, the spirit seems to be preparing itself for its great change. How differently life is regarded from one's death-bed; how tawdry seem all the things for which we have spent our strength; how beautiful through our regrets seem the things which we abandoned as unworthy of our attention. The death-bed repentance is proverbially unreliable if the patient recovers, though some of the greatest conversions in history have followed serious illness. But what is clear is that the coming of death does suddenly pass the whole of life under a judgment which is both more searching and more impartial than anything to which we seem able otherwise to attain. In many cases a conscience that seems to have been sleeping or silenced comes to life, and men who have lived a life which has seemed destructive of all idealism suddenly develop a moral perception which is clear, mordant, and resistless. If these things are to develop beyond death as they seem to develop before death, it needs only the cool science of the psychologist to imagine conditions of which Dante's Inferno is no exaggeration. Hell is not the invention of religion and theology: it is due to the unsophisticated intuition of mankind, and it is confirmed by the discoveries of science. The Christian religion has rather softened the picture by suggesting that it is spiritual, Divine and educative, not hopeless, if only the best be hoped.

'I think,' says Cardinal Newman, 'what makes me low is the awful thought that where my lost departed friends are, there I must be; and that they can and do rejoice in their trial and their judgment being over, whereas I am still on trial and have judgment to come. The idea of a judgment is the first principle of religion, as being involved in the sentiment of conscience, and as life goes on it becomes very overpowering. Nor do the good tidings of Christianity reverse it, unless we go into the extreme of Calvinism or Methodism, with the doctrine of personal assurance. Otherwise, the more one has received, the

more one has to answer for. We can but throw ourselves on the mercy of God, of which one's whole life is a long experience.' [1]

The Sin-Bearer.

Heb. ix. 28.—'So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.'

We are not to understand that the sins of the world are put upon Christ, or transferred to Him, so as to be His. That is impossible. Guilt is a matter so strictly and eternally personal that nobody can be in it but the transgressor himself to whom it belongs.

1. He bears the sin of the world, because love puts every being, from the eternal God downward, into the case of all sufferers, wrong-doers, and enemies, to assume or take upon itself their evils, and be concerned for them. Being love, it assumes their loss, danger, present suffering, suffering to be; all their want, sorrow, shame, and disorder; and goes into their case to restore and save. As a father who has a son straying from honour and virtue bears him, sin and all, as a heavy load, striving after him in many tears and prayers, that he may regain him to a better life; just so God assumes in Christ all transgressors and enemies, all their sin and all their coming woes, and bears them on His paternal feeling, through great waves of living conflict and dying passion—'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' The assumption is such that we may even look upon it and speak of it as a kind of substitution. Hence the strongly substitutional language employed concerning it. But there is no room for mistaking the meaning of such language. The precise nature of the assumption, or substitution, is given when the evangelist says of Christ's healing works—'That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.' It does not mean that Christ literally took into His body and Himself bore all the fevers, pains, lamenesses, blindnesses, leprosies He healed, but simply that He took them upon His sympathy, bore them as a burden upon His compassionate love. In that sense exactly He assumed and bore the sins of the world; not that He became the sinner and suffered the due punishment Himself, but that He took them on His love, and put Himself by mighty throes of feeling and sacrifice and mortal passion, to the working out of their deliverance.

2. It is another and equally true conception of the bearing of sins by Christ, that He is incarnated into the state of sin, including all the woes of penalty under it—woes that infest the world, the body, and the social and political departments of human affairs. These disorders and mischiefs comprehend what is called in Scripture 'the curse'; for the curse is just that state of retributive disorder and disjunction that follows under natural laws the outbreak of sin. The virus of disease, possibly of all disease, is generated under and by these laws. Natural causes are beneficent henceforth only in the qualified sense that they are attacking sin with due mixtures of pain as well as with favours undeserved. Dreadful superstitions cloud the general understanding. Truth is obscured. Passion is made coarse and violent. Envies, ambitions, grudges, hatreds are loosened, and bloody wrongs are instigated everywhere by them. Oppressions, persecutions, rebellions, wars roll across the nations and turn the world's history into a kind of Aceldama. This now is the curse, the corporate woe of the world; and when Christ comes down into the world to be incarnate in it, and do His work of love, He enters into its corporate evils, and takes them just as they are; even as a man, plunging into the sea, would take as they are the waves and the monsters coursing in it. All which is described by an Apostle, when he says that Christ 'was made a curse for us.'

3. Christ bears the sin of the world, in the sense that He bears, consentingly, the direct attacks of wrong or sin upon His person; doing it, of course, in but a few instances such as may have been included in His comparatively short life, but showing in those few instances how all the human wrongs are related to His feeling, or would be if He suffered them all. And here again it is that He gets an amazing power, as a Redeemer, over the sins of the world. He did not come into the world to suffer these wrongs as an end, or to

[1] *Letters and Correspondence of J. H. Newman*, ii. 481.

brave them by an ostentation of patience, as possibly some may understand when they hear Him commanding one who is smitten on one cheek to turn the other. He is counselling in such words, not a defiant, but only a total, non-resistance. Coming into the world thus as the incarnate Word of God, God manifest in the flesh, He bears the wrong-doing of sin, not defiantly, but as feeling after the sin; letting it see what wrong it has in its own nature to do when the Son of God comes to it ministering love and forgiveness. And what a spectacle is this to look upon! the Eternal King coming in love to win transgression back—mocked in His doctrine, hated for His miracles, insulted, struck, spit upon, crucified! And the more strangely impressive is the spectacle, that the sufferer is dumb, makes no protestation of His rights, parries no accusation, answers none. Pilate himself is 'afraid' before such dignity. All that He will answer is, that He is come into the world 'to bear witness to the truth.' He does not say that He is here to bear the worst they can do upon Him, nor that He is here to suffer at all as an end, but that His end is everlasting truth. That, accordingly, which so visibly shook the courage of Pilate at the trial, fell afterwards with as heavy a shock on all sin everywhere. When the sin found such a Being, even the incarnate Word of the Father, taking its blows in such patience, and dying under the blows, how dreadful the recoil of feeling it suffered! How wild, and weak, and low, was it made to appear in its own sight! Thus it was that, in His bearing of sin upon the Cross, Christ broke it down for ever.

Salvation and the Second Coming.

Heb. ix. 28.—'Unto them that look for him will he appear the second time unto salvation.'

That the salvation of the Christian, in its perfect sense, can be effected only by the second coming of Christ is one of the facts plainly taught in Scripture. It is in reference to this day that St. Paul says, 'Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' It is at the appearing of Christ that he expects his 'crown of righteousness.' The New Testament writers uniformly connect salvation with the appearing of Christ—in harmony with their Lord's words, 'I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' That our salvation should be connected with, and dependent upon, the second coming of Christ is worth careful examination.

1. First, let it be observed that the coming will be personal and real. Jesus Christ appeared personally to Stephen and Paul after His ascension; and when we read of His coming and being revealed again, it is obvious that it is a coming and manifestation in person that is meant. And with this direct personal appearing our salvation is connected. This is because the personal revelation of Christ will be accompanied by, and will carry in it, that fullness of energy which alone will be equal to effecting our salvation. The personal presence of Christ was an immense power, even in the days of His humiliation; and it may be safely believed that it will be far greater in His glorification.

2. Again, the precise character of the power of the presence of Christ will be better understood if we remember that His coming will take place in the spirit-world. St. Paul says, 'The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord *in the air*.' By comparing this expression with another which occurs in St. Paul's writings—'*the prince of the power of the air, the spirit* that now worketh in the children of disobedience'—we see that 'the air' is a figurative expression for that invisible spiritual world which borders on our world. The meeting with Christ will take place in that spirit-world in which we shall all be when we have been clothed with immortality.

Now, in such a world the spiritual predominates in all things. It will be so in the appearing of Christ in that world. He will be seen in bodily form; but the vision of His spirit will be more powerful than that of His form. In Jesus Christ we shall see not only a glorious person, but yet more distinctly the glorious mind and spirit. We shall see Christ's thought and it will enter our thought; we shall see Christ's heart and

it will affect our hearts; and we shall see all the moral perfections of Christ's character and they will affect our characters. The bodily form of Christ, which is a spiritual body, will be only a medium for connecting us more closely with His spirit. He will flow into us in the measure of our capacity to receive Him; and He will thus put forth in all our hearts the direct power of His own life.

3. But salvation includes more than this. The glorification of the body and its entire deliverance from suffering is required. Now, in a spiritual state, not only does spirit rule over body, but it makes the body what it is. A glorious soul makes a glorious body; a soul without disease makes a body without disease. And so also a society without sin will call for a world without darkness or evil of any kind. For in a spiritual world all things are images of the spirits which dwell in it. Thus at the appearing of Christ all things will be made new. 'The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' The thought and life of God, which make heaven, will be set forth in the harmony, beauty, and variety of a heavenly world. Then will sorrow and suffering, decay and death, ugliness and confusion, be unknown. And all souls who have entered into a true spiritual fellowship on earth will be drawn by spiritual attractions into an eternal communion. The coming of Christ will save from error and sin, will glorify our bodies, will create a new world suffused with the Divine mind, will reunite for ever those who are conjoined in spirit. This, let it be remembered, will all be accomplished by the personal presence of Christ infusing into us more abundantly His mind and spirit. 'Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.'

The Shadow and the Substance.

Heb. x. 1.—'The law having a shadow of good things to come.'

WHAT exactly does the writer of this Epistle mean when he says the Law is a 'shadow'? Something like this, probably. The Law was a true revelation of the will of God. Its precepts set forth what God demanded of men and expected from them. By fulfilling its precepts men might set themselves right with God, and by setting themselves right with God set themselves right also with their own conscience. What St. Paul calls 'righteousness' was the prospect and promise held out by the Law. But as a matter of fact the Law never fulfilled its promise. It never set a man right with God, for the simple reason that no man ever fulfilled its demands; and, consequently, it never brought to any man peace of heart. The failure of the Law to bestow upon men either 'righteousness' or 'peace' is illustrated in St. Paul's experience. With all the passion of his soul he set himself to observe every detail of the Law in order that he might put himself right with God. But he never succeeded. He was constantly coming short in one respect or another, so that the Law, instead of bringing him peace, brought him condemnation and despair. It was only the 'shadow' of peace and reconciliation with God that St. Paul found in the Law. The reality, the 'substance,' was not in it. The Law pointed forward to something better than itself. All its ritual of sacrifice, all its offerings of bulls and goats (which could not take away sin) pointed forward to some more availing sacrifice. And the better thing to which the Law pointed, St. Paul found in Christ and His Cross. In that great sacrifice he really found righteousness, reconciliation, peace. 'Thanks be to God,' he cries, 'through Jesus Christ our Lord.' The Law was but the 'shadow' of good things to come; the 'substance,' the reality, the good thing itself, was in Christ.

1. Now this relation of 'shadow' and 'substance' holds true not only of Law and Gospel, but also of this life and the life to come, of earth and heaven. There is a vast amount of 'shadow' in this life. There is much in it that is insubstantial and illusory. It does not fulfil its promises. It does not satisfy the hopes it raises. If life really ended at the grave we should have to write it down as an illusion pure and simple, a cheat, a mockery. But there is a great Beyond. The 'substance' of the things we strive for is reserved for us there. Heaven shall make perfect earth's imperfect life. The 'shadows' of this life are prophetic of realities in that life which is to come.

(1) For illustration of the shadowy, illusory character of the life which now is, let us take, first, the idea of *success*. Most men when they start out in life do so with the intention of making a 'success' of it. Many, judging by the ordinary human standards, fail. A few, as we say, succeed. They make money. They win fame. They gain popularity and position. When they started their careers, they believed that in these things they would find a certain solid satisfaction. But when they actually gain possession of them, they find they have grasped at a shadow. 'Here lies one,' was Keat's verdict on himself, though he had won enduring fame, 'whose name was writ in water.' Henry Martyn slaved away at his studies in Cambridge, feeling that if he could only win a high place in the Honours list he would have achieved real success. When the lists were published, his name stood first. He was Senior Wrangler. And when he saw his name there, instead of being overjoyed, the success seemed to him so empty, such a bubble, that he burst into tears. We do not reveal our emotions so plainly nowadays. But if we could see into the hearts of our so-called 'successful' men, we should discover there a curious sense of disillusionment. Life seems to have mocked them. It has not given them what it promised. 'Success' turns out to be but a 'shadow.'

And always to pursue success is to miss something higher. In the Life of Charles M. Alexander, the famous singer and soul-winner, there is this passage: What does the Bible say God's servants will hear? 'Well done! good and *successful* servant'? No, not that. It is the *faithful* servant who will get the reward. In America the word one meets everywhere is 'SUCCESS,' but 'BE FAITHFUL' is the best motto, and that is what God wants. He is looking for reliable men and women that He can depend on.

(2) Let us take for our second illustration the idea of *happiness*. We are all hungry for it and we need not be in the least ashamed to confess it. But happiness has a tantalizing way of escaping us. There is a familiar picture in which Pleasure—depicted as an alluring but rather lascivious female figure—is represented as being pursued by a host of devotees, whose grasp she always just manages to elude. The suggestion of the picture is that those who live for pleasure never really possess it. Every man who journeys into the far country in search of pleasure sooner or later 'begins to be in want.' Deep, unruffled, satisfied happiness, we none of us enjoy. Life is full of anxieties and fears. The very love that enriches us exposes us also to infinite pain.

Gibbon, *(Decline and Fall,* vi. 26) gives the testimony of Abdalrahman, the monarch of Cardova; 'I have now reigned above fifty years in victory or peace; beloved by my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches and honours, power and pleasure, have waited on my call, nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot: they amount to FOURTEEN: O man, place not thy confidence on this present world!'

(3) For a third illustration let us take *life* itself. We all want life. We were made for life and we long to possess it—real life with satisfaction for every faculty and energy, life with fullness and richness and zest in it. But we do not get it. Some seem to get a fuller life than others, but no one seems to get the real thing. For some, life is cramped and fettered by circumstances. What do our slum dwellers and our very poor know about life? Men and women shut up in mean streets, who divide their time between grinding toil and heavy sleep, with perhaps a visit to the public house by way of variation—what do they know about life? For others life is narrowed and impoverished by sickness. What do the crippled and the invalid know about life? For all of us life is marred and broken by loss and sorrow. And then death comes, sometimes late, sometimes tragically soon, and takes life clean away. What have the tens of thousands of young lads who perished in the war known about life? No! we certainly do not get real life—the kind of life we long for—down here. Life for many, nay, for all of us in turn, seems an empty and hollow thing. All the zest and effervescence go out of it. It is the merest 'shadow' of what we mean by life, not the 'substance' of it.

There is a curious passage in the *Reminiscences* of Lord Ronald Gower. Fittingly, it is the very last paragraph of the book: 'Life,' Lord Beaconsfield said to me that last time I was with him at

Hughenden, 'life is an *ennui,* or an anxiety'; and he enlarged on his text by saying that for the self-made life is full of troubles and anxieties, for fear of losing the position or wealth they have obtained; and for those born with position and wealth there is nothing to strive for, and life then becomes a mere bore, an *ennui,* and a burden. 'My idea,' he added, 'of a happy future state is one of those long mid-summer days, when one dines at nine o'clock!' Lord Beaconsfield had left out the majority of mankind, those who cannot afford either to be anxious or to be bored; and, indeed, in that half-way state I believe the truest earthly happiness exists. Life, when those we have loved and cherished in it are taken from us, is a long sadness; but, thank God, we may humbly hope that in His good time we shall again meet with our lost and loved. One has but little wish to cling to life with such a hope in death—

Then steal away, give little warning,
Choose thine own time;
Say not 'Good-night,' but in some brighter clime
Bid me 'Good-morning.' [1]

2. 'Coming events cast their shadows before,' we say. And the success and happiness of life which we seek on earth and find to be so disappointing are unreal, are just the 'shadows' of the real success, and the real happiness, and the real life which awaits us in the world to come. It is one of the axioms of our thinking about God that He is a God of truth. God is not a man that He should lie. He does not cheat or deceive men. He does not mislead or betray them. He does not plant an instinct in the soul in order to disappoint and mock it. God must keep His word. He must be true. If He plants the instinct for success and happiness and life in the human heart, it must be because He means to satisfy it. Every instinct is prophetic of its own fulfilment. God gives men the faculty of vision, and there is a beautiful world for the eye to see. God gives man the faculty of hearing, and there is a whole world of ravishing sounds to listen to. God gives man the faculty of love, and there are other human beings and God Himself for him to love. In exactly the same way He has planted in the heart of man this instinct, this hunger for achievement, for happiness, for life. Our present existence certainly does not give these things to us. But, just because God is a God of truth, they must be waiting for us somewhere. And so they are! The unsatisfying success, the marred and broken happiness, the half-empty life of earth, are just 'shadows' of the good things to come. They point forward to a solid success, a perfect happiness, an abundant life in the Great Beyond. The reality and substance of the things we hope for and strive for are there.

(1) Our partial and unsatisfying successes are the 'shadow' of a real success to come. Part of the tragedy of life is that it does not bring us the success we seek. We do not achieve. We go down to the dust with tasks unfinished and ideals unrealized. But the world to come is the place of achievement and realization. One of the reasons which has most imperiously driven men to demand an immortality is this sense of life's incompleteness. When great men have been cut off in the midst of their years, when Lycidas dies 'ere his prime,' the human heart resolutely refuses to believe that life can be wantonly wasted in that way, and demands another world in which these men may continue their work and achieve the great things that were possible to them. And this instinct of the heart is right. The attempts and partial achievements of earth are 'shadows' of good things to come. The singer shall sing the song that was in his heart though it never came to his lips. The poet shall write the glowing things which were in his mind, but for which on earth he could find no words. The artist shall paint the picture which gleamed before his imagination, but which never was put on canvas. The ambitions our youth set before themselves—nipped in the bud as they have been for thousands of them by premature death—have not been finally thwarted. In fairer realms and under brighter skies, everything that was true and worthy in them will fulfil itself: 'On the earth the broken arcs, in the heaven, a perfect round.' And this best achievement of all awaits us in the world to come, the achievement of a holy character. We strive and fail down here. The success that even the very best of men meet with is an unsatisfying one. 'Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect,' says St. Paul. But our strivings and endeavours are 'shadows' of the good things to come. Effort

[1] Lord R. Gower, *My Reminiscences,* 175.

here is to become achievement there. Aspiration here is to become attainment there. 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

(2) Our broken and interrupted happiness is prophetic of a real happiness to come. Happiness is not an illusion pure and simple. The happiness we get on earth is more or less 'shadowy.' But real, solid, abiding happiness awaits us in the life beyond. The hunger of the heart is not to be disappointed. 'In his presence is fulness of joy; at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore.' The things that mar our happiness down here are to be taken away. Sin is to vex our peace no more. Death and sorrow are to be strangers to us, and God shall wipe away all tears from off our faces. Above all, we shall enjoy the Beatific Vision. We shall see God face to face, and with the vision of God the hungry soul will be abundantly satisfied. 'Man never is, but always to be blessed,' says the poet. He never *is* blessed. His happiness is never complete down here. But he is *to be* blessed. The broken and intermittent happiness of earth are 'shadows' of a better and perfect happiness to come.

(3) Our narrow and crippled lives are prophetic of full and abundant life to come. Life does not end at the grave. It begins there to get its chance. We are all of us to get the kind of life we want—life with zest and fullness and richness in it. This poor mortal life of ours, which never satisfies us because it is so cramped and fettered in multitudes of ways, is just the 'shadow' of the good thing to come. Our dead have really entered into life. The desire for life beat strongly in the breasts of those lads of ours who went forth to fight our battles for us. They wanted great life, high life, heroic life. Many of them fell. But let us not unduly grieve for them. They found the life they wanted. 'He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.' And they have found it—life at the maximum, life that never palls or stales, life replete with interest and zest! It is only the 'shadow' of life we have down here; they have the life which is life indeed.

There are good things to come, so let us be of good cheer both for ourselves and for those whom we love. There is real achievement, real happiness, and real life in store for us. Life is not all illusion and emptiness and disappointment. Its longings and aspirations are not a mockery and a fraud. It is quite true that we do not get the reality of the things we desire down here—only the 'shadows' of them. But God will not disappoint us. 'All we have hoped or dreamed of good' shall be ours in the life that awaits us when this life is done.

There is a sea, a quiet sea,
Beyond the farthest line,
Where all my ships that went astray,
And all my dreams of yesterday,
And all the things that were to be,
Are mine!

There is a land, a quiet land,
Beyond the setting sun,
Where every task in which I quailed,
And all wherein my courage failed,
Where all the good my spirit planned,
Is done!

There is a hope, a quiet hope,
Within my heart instilled,
That if undaunted on I sail,
The guiding star shall never pale,
But shine within my labour's scope,
Fulfilled!

And there's a tide, a quiet tide,
Flowing towards a goal,
That sweeps by every humble shore,
And at its fullest ebbs no more.
And on that final swell shall ride.
My soul!

Sacrifice.

Heb. x. 5.—'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.'

THERE is no idea more closely and more generally connected with religion than that of sacrifice. Every addition to our knowledge of every variety of religion confirms the truth of this statement. And owing to the immense amount of attention now being directed to the study of Comparative Religion, our knowledge of religion generally has enormously increased. Whatever religion, or form of religion, we investigate, we inevitably find some form of sacrifice, or at least the idea of sacrifice, inextricably connected with it. Wider and deeper study has achieved more than this; it has largely modified our conception of the funda-

mental idea of sacrifice itself. At one time it was considered that the chief object of sacrifice was propitiation; but further knowledge has shown that the main purpose of sacrifice is rather to enter into communion, though of course the idea of propitiation is also frequently present.

This change of view as to the root idea of sacrifice will be found to throw much light upon many passages in both the Old Testament and the New, which previously were difficult to understand. For instance, it may indicate why the sacrifice of Abel was, and the sacrifice of Cain was not, accepted. Together with the gift must go a certain spirit, if the gift is to be acceptable. Apart from a spirit of communion, communion itself is impossible. This idea of the desire to enter into communion also accounts for the way in which the Biblical writers pass so easily from the idea of the material to that of the spiritual sacrifice, the sacrifice of the heart and of the will, or 'the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.'

1. Expressed quite briefly, the fundamental idea of sacrifice in the Bible seems to be that an offering is made by man to God in which God and man can together participate, and that by this participation man can enter into communion with God. This explains why so many sacrifices were burnt, *i.e.*, took the form of burnt-offerings. One part of what was sacrificed rose in steam or smoke into the air, and this the Deity was supposed to consume, hence the origin of the expression, 'the Lord smelled a sweet savour'; the other part was consumed by the worshippers at the feast which so generally followed the offering of the sacrifice. This eating and drinking is sometimes described as 'before' (in the presence of) the Lord, He being regarded as (invisibly) present at the feast.

2. In the light of these thoughts let us contemplate the great, perfect, complete and sufficient sacrifice of Christ. Of this all the sacrificial rites of Israel, indeed all previous sacrifices (so far as they were offered in faith and with an earnest desire to enter into communion with God), were more or less partial foreshadowings. In this sacrifice, all subsequent sacrifices, in exact proportion to the likeness of the spirit in which they are offered to the Spirit of Christ, find their justification. Then as we contemplate the sacrifice of Christ, let us be careful to remember that that sacrifice—from the Incarnation to the death upon the Cross—was one complete and perfect whole. We must not attempt to separate the death of sacrifice from the life of sacrifice; we cannot teach the doctrine of the Atonement truthfully apart from the doctrine of the Incarnation. What then, as we contemplate Christ's sacrifice, do we see? We see Christ willingly and wholly offering Himself to God as a means whereby man may enter into full and perfect communion with God.

3. But if we are to rise to the loftiest idea of sacrifice, if we are to grasp its highest teaching, we must not be content to regard it as having its origin in man; we must regard it as implanted in the human heart by God. Like every other noblest and best conception in the world sacrifice has its prototype in God. We must think of the sacrifice of God the Father as well as of God the Son: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.' If there is to be perfect communion between God and man, if man is to share the eternal life of God, then God, both as Father and as Son, must be a party in providing that sacrifice of which man shall partake, and by which he shall be strengthened and sustained. The very idea of sacrifice is thus seen to be Divine in origin.

Consider those words spoken at our Lord's Baptism, which seem to reveal the very innermost heart of God: 'This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.' Christ was dedicating Himself anew to the great sacrifice which He would offer, and which He was already actually offering for the sake of man, for the sake of man's communion with God. In doing this He was perfectly entering into and fulfilling the eternal purpose of God, who would not the death of a single sinner, but that all should turn and be saved. Thus the sacrifice of Christ in the completeness of both His Deity and His humanity is one with the sacrificial nature, purpose, and method of the Father. As is Christ's relation to the Father, so must be our relation to Christ. He offered Himself for the fulfilment of God's purpose, as a means of *at-one-ment* between man and God; we must offer ourselves to Him for the fulfilment of His purpose,

which is God's purpose. This must be the motive and object of all Christian sacrifice. As a Christian student I may offer my thinking and reasoning powers in order to teach more adequately; as a Christian worker I may offer my time and my opportunities of rest or pleasure; or I may offer my money to help some good cause which I believe to be according to the mind of Christ. In each case it must be the offering of something whereby man may come into closer communion with God, it must be a means whereby this may be promoted.

4. Let us now go a step further and recognize a condition which all the highest and purest forms of sacrifice should satisfy—they must include or embody a sacrifice of life; for life is both the means and the end of our communion with God. This is only one instance of that universal principle of Christianity, that the means to an end cannot be divorced from, cannot indeed be different from, the end itself. The object and the means of God's infinite sacrifice of His Son, the archetype of all true sacrifice, is eternal life; but this can be accomplished only by the sacrifice of a life. And this truth is taught by the forms in which the old sacrifices were embodied, in the materials which were used. The most usual of these materials was either some animal suitable for food, or a portion of the fruits of the earth; as, for instance, the shewbread, or the meat offering, or even an offering of fruit. In every case—with perhaps the one exception of incense—the means or material of the sacrifice contained life, and the end of the sacrifice was life. Those who feasted upon the sacrificed lamb or kid—very common objects of sacrifice—received physical strength; those who entered into spiritual communion with God received spiritual strength to enable them to live more as they ought.

If we bear these conditions in mind we have at once the true object and the adequate test of all worthy sacrifice. Is its object to enable us and others to enter more fully into the will of God and to promote His purpose? And will it, when its method and its material are examined, be found calculated to further the same object for which the great sacrifice of Christ, the one sufficient pattern of all sacrifices, was offered to God?

The Gift of the Body.

Heb. x. 5.—'A body hast thou prepared me.'

THESE words are spoken of Christ. They refer to that which is the centre of all Christian doctrine and all Christian hope—the Incarnation of God in human flesh. But through the Incarnation they have a reference to each one of us. There is no human being, man, woman, or child, to whom they may not be applied. For each one of us the providence of God has prepared a body, and the body is to every man the mirror and expression of himself. The pain of the body is his pain, the discipline of the body is his own discipline, the likeness of the body is his own likeness, the consecration of the body is his own consecration. The body is every man's instrument of training. The body is every man's instrument and opportunity of service. And the body is every man's instrument and opportunity of sacrifice.

Think, then, of the life of the body: First, as the means of service; and secondly, as the means of sacrifice.

1. *The body for service.*—And first of all there is to everyone a body to feel in, and to grow in, and to rejoice in: a body in which, and through which, to feel what freedom and health and lightness and joy and the exercise of power mean; a body in which to be wholesome; a body, perhaps, even in which to be beautiful—the body of growth, the body of youth.

> Nought cared this body for wind or weather
> When youth and I lived in 't together.

All this is part of the meaning and purpose of the Divine gift. For these, and all such things as these, the body is the Divine instrument Divinely prepared. It is the act and gift of God. 'A body hast thou prepared me.'

But all these gifts and powers carry with them of necessity another aspect. Because of the very fact of its power of health and of beauty and of enjoyment, the body is the appointed scene and instrument of moral discipline. It is by the use of the body, it is by the command of the body, that character is formed. It was given to shape and to train, not for selfish pleasure, but for discipline of character. All moral self-control comes

first of all in the form of control of body. Eating and drinking and softness and rest—they are all good. But because they can all be abused to selfishness and sin, therefore there is moral character with them all. From the earliest childhood there is no one who is not largely shaping his own moral character, his own moral possibilities, by his use of the body. Either he is learning to restrain appetite, and rule it according to his highest knowledge and will, or he is learning to indulge it and be enslaved by it. It is not simply his body; yet how largely is the body the very image and mirror of himself. On the one side it is the man's inner character which often goes a long way towards making the body what it is. For there is all the difference in the world, as we know well, between the bodily power of the drunken and the dissolute, and of those who are well trained and disciplined in bodily influence. And on the other side, there are countless ways in which the precise forms and trials of a man's inward life depend upon the condition of his body. A man's special powers and special temptations, his special successes and special difficulties, the outward condition of his trial and the inward strain of pride or of mortification, how largely do these all depend upon the nature of the body, which is the arena and the instrument of the training, as it is the expression and mirror of himself. Again, the body is his instrument for doing useful work in the world. Even brain work is done through the body, and depends upon bodily conditions of soundness and of health. Still more obviously the service of ordinary work, the industry of hands and of feet, the strength of back and limbs, which constitute a man's livelihood because they make his usefulness in the world—is not all this a gift and ordinance of God? 'A body hast thou prepared me.' In all these things, for health and strength and gladness and power, for discipline and control, and the shaping and training of character, for work in the world, for livelihood, and for usefulness, the body is a gift Divinely ordained, Divinely prepared. In all these ways it is man's instrument and servant.

2. And then it is also *man's instrument for sacrifice*. It is in connection with sacrifice that it is mentioned in the text: 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.' Long, long ago, many centuries before the Epistle to the Hebrews, a son put this question to his father: 'Where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.' It is as though the echo of Abraham's words came back long afterwards in the words of another Son to His Heavenly Father: 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.'

The body, if it is nothing else, is every man's Divinely prepared opportunity for sacrifice. It is in the body that man learns to suffer, not only without crying out or offering wild rebellion, but with ever-increasing tenderness and sympathy, with deepening powers of moral and spiritual beauty. It is through the body that he learns to suffer, and to consecrate suffering as sacrifice. There are some whose main task throughout life lies in the sacrifice of bodily suffering, or, at the least, of bodily disability—men or women who work out their spiritual discipline through the patience of the disabled limb or the invalid couch, cut off by God's providence from the things which make not only the joy, but the useful service and the value, of other men. It is this weakness, this pain, which constitutes their sacrifice before God.

We do not need to think only of exceptional suffering or exceptional invalids, however full the world may be even of them, for there is no man living who has not in his own body his appointed method of sacrifice; there is no man living to whom will not come the day of the failure of bodily strength, whether in sharp sickness, or accident, or through growing infirmity or decay. The final, the utter surrender of bodily activity is a Divinely appointed necessity in man. Nor is there any man living whose character is not in large measure determined even here and now by the spirit in which he himself looks forward to this surrender. How far—that is the question—how far can he make it, in anticipation as well as when the moment comes to him, a real act of willing and dutiful submission, the homage of a true sacrifice to the love of Almighty God? 'A body hast thou prepared me'; a body not only as the training-ground of character and the means of sacrifice, but also as the very material for sacrifice.

Dr. Elder Cumming, in his sketch of the character of John Dickie of Irvine, says: 'Here is a distinction which he makes between serving in health and serving in sickness: One servant is called to labour *with* his body, thus serving God; another is called to suffer patiently *in* his body, thus doing Him service. Happy they who in either case seek no selfish end, but seek only to serve His holy will and to enjoy His satisfying, sanctifying communion.' [1]

Taking and Giving.

Heb. x. 9.—'He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.'

The writer of this letter had a great task before him. He had to try to make some people see the meaning of a loss. In what tender and masterly fashion he did his work it matters not to us for the moment. Suffice it to say one can scarcely conceive of its being better done. The letter was written to Jews who could not reconcile themselves to the loss of the Temple, with its splendid ritual, its stately and impressive worship, its wealth of form and type, and its endless symbolism. Whilst in some sense entering into the spirit of the new day, they were still partially dominated by the habit of a thousand yesterdays.

We can look with sympathy on those Jews in their difficult passage from the old to the new. It is not easy to abandon an established tradition. Habits of thought and conduct get a wonderfully strong hold upon nations and upon individuals. One can clearly see that the Christian Jew would be very slow at times in realizing the meaning of the new conditions of spiritual life involved in his acceptance of Jesus Christ. So to these men in their passing confusion of thought—to these men, who undestood far better what they had lost in the passing of the Jewish Temple than what they had gained in the founding of the Christian Church—came the writer of this letter to the Hebrews, to enter into their difficulties, to show them that upon the loss against which they were feeling and uttering resentment, there was being built an immeasurable gain which they but dimly appreciated.

The keynote of the Epistle is found in our text, 'He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.' The writer says, 'I acknowledge you have lost something—something very beautiful and comforting, something that has met your national need for centuries. But I want you to look beyond that loss, and find the splendid meaning of it, and see that it is really the condition of a nobler worship and a larger life than Israel has ever known.' He taketh away. This is God's work. And God's taking is just the otherwise of His giving.

1. That is the philosophy of growing up. The first was beautiful; we call it our childhood. It was joy without a shadow of care—being without responsibility. And it has been taken away in order to make room for a fuller, stronger life—a life that knows the glory of effort, the thrill of costly hoping, and the ceaseless struggle for expression and fulfilment. There is a song that says, 'Make me a child again'; but we would not go back. The second is greater than the first. It always is when God takes and gives. You have only to look back and you can find a precious parable of gain by loss running through your maturing years.

2. That is the story of the soul's growth into the knowledge of God and the fuller sense of all things spiritual. One who was an expert in the inward things once said, 'Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.' That is the philosophy of conversion. It is a taking away of the first—the first conception of good and gain, the first ideal of life, that another conception and ideal may take their place. The first is of the earth earthy; the second is of God. And that is an epitome of the whole process of salvation, both for the individual and for the community. He taketh away the outward that He may establish the inward, the seen that He may establish the unseen, the material that He may establish the spiritual. The Jew had a religion that appealed to his senses. It was to some extent spectacular. Its tendency was temporal and local. It was a religion of times and places. He could not cling to it and at the same time enter into the timeless and universal gospel of Jesus Christ. And so the vision of the eyes had to go that the vision of the heart might grow clearer. The vision of Jeru-

[1] J. E. Cumming, *Holy Men of God*, 289.

salem of Judæa had to fade that the Jew might see the New Jerusalem, the City of God, coming down from heaven—a city ever being builded of all gentle, peaceable, pure, faithful, and selfless lives.

3. In the discipline of life the principle is exemplified. God meant life to be a discipline for every one of us; He did not mean us to spend our few years in this world merely in eating and drinking, and living as we list, and then dying. If He has taken us under His gracious guidance, or is beginning to take us, or is dealing with us to this end, as under the gospel He is more or less dealing with all men, He means life to be for us a discipline. He means to school us to something better than we naturally plan and would carry out for ourselves. Thus it comes to pass that our lives in this world are marked, as we all sorrowfully know, by a great deal of taking away. No doubt they are also marked by a great deal of giving on God's part: 'Every good gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.' God gives many good things to us all, which we ought to consider more than most of us probably do. And the giving as well as the taking away is part of the discipline of life for us. God looks to see how we take His gifts; whether we acknowledge Him in them and are thankful; whether His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering are leading the impenitent to repentance and the godly to more godliness, or whether the gifts crowd out the Giver.

(1) 'He taketh away the first.' What is the first? Perhaps it is self-confidence—proud, masterful, irreverent, self-reliance. Do you remember so-and-so? What a self-contained and self-satisfied man he was. He went his own way, and in the main it seemed a very successful way. You rather admired that way of his. You called it ideal. That was not God's ideal for that man's life. It is not His ideal for any life. You remember that dark days came upon that sure man—losses in his business and shadows in his home. In the market his shrewdness failed him, and an empty place in his home taught him the lesson of his heart's need. You pitied him in those days of prostration and sorrow. 'Poor fellow; things are going very badly with him just now.' Thus you spoke, and you never made a greater mistake. Things never went better with him than then. People said he lost a thousand pounds' worth of business last year; and there was that mound in the churchyard. But that was not all. The story of loss had a Divine purpose and a Divine sequel. God was taking away the first confidence that was in self and things seen, and was establishing in that man's heart a second confidence in Christ and things not seen. The whole basis of that man's thinking and planning and hoping has been shifted from the human to the Divine.

(2) What is 'the first'? Faith in the world of men and things. The Christian religion does not make men suspicious, cynical, or distrustful. No man lives very long in the world without having a fairly liberal opportunity of developing all three qualities. But the set of circumstances, the course of experience, which so often develops these things is meant in the purpose of God to develop something very different. The breaking of human faith is meant to lead us to rest in the Divine faithfulness. The final lesson to be learned from the manifold uncertainty of human life is neither the sneer of the cynic nor the wail of the pessimist; it is the infinite reliability of God. He taketh away the first, which is faith in the tangible and contingent and relative, that He may establish the second, which is faith in the invisible and eternal and real.

There are two passages in the New Testament which, taken together, form perhaps the most perfect illustration of this principle. They are these: 'I go unto my Father,' 'I am with you alway.' Jesus Christ took Himself from His disciples' eyes in order that He might give Himself to their hearts. They lost the first, the earthly Presence, that they might find the second—the spiritual.

A Double Vicariousness.

Heb. x. 14.—'By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.'

To understand this verse it is necessary to remember that the cleansing effected by means of the old Levitical sacrifices was, from the Jewish point of view, a *sanctifying*. The man cleansed and restored was a man sanctified. But such sanctifying, such ritual cleansing, was only the shadow and suggestion of the true sanctifying, the spiritual cleansing. A man heart-cleansed, conscience-

cleansed, and so restored to his right relations with God, is the man truly sanctified. And what has to be shown is, that the one spiritual offering which Christ made of His whole human life, in one sublime and perfect obedience to the will of God, has an effective power unto such spiritual sacrifice. By ' perfected for ever ' is clearly meant, proved wholly effective, so that no other supplementary agency can ever be necessary. How then does that one sacrifice which Christ offered act in a way of sanctifying upon our hearts and lives?

Does it mean that we have not to fight with sin because Christ has fought with it? Or does it mean that His fighting with sin shows us how to fight with it and be successful? Does it not mean both? Is there not a double vicariousness—a vicariousness of substitution, and a vicariousness of illustration? When the Lord goes, in our place, into the midst of sin, into the jaws of death, it is as when a brave guide climbs before a party of travellers up the face of a steep wall of ice which they must all mount after him. He goes for them, not for himself. If he were going for himself alone, some venturous spring in what is for them an impossible place might set him in a moment on the ridge they have to reach, but he goes in a way where they can follow him. And as he goes he does two things for them: First, he cuts down certain hindrances over which he has to clamber, so that when they come they do not have to clamber over them; and, second, he shows them the way to climb the steepest places, and cuts them footsteps in the ice so that they may be able to go where he has gone. He cries out to his poor timid followers, ' This thing you need not do, for I have done it '; and at other times he cries, ' This thing you shall be able to do, for I have done it.'

Is it not so with Jesus and what He did for us? There are some burdens of sin which no soul need ever bear, because of what the Saviour has already borne. There is a terror in death which we need never know, because He has died. There are some depths of darkness into which we look, but into which we need never descend, because He went so deep for us into the mysterious pain of life and death. Some clouds scatter as we approach them when we challenge them in the name of 'His Agony and Bloody Sweat, His Cross and Passion, His Precious Death and Burial.' And then there are other clouds, sufferings, fears, temptations, doubts, which do not scatter; into them we have to walk. But into them we know how to walk because He has already walked there. It is not a trackless waste; the wisdom and the strength came from our Lord.

As the disciples came back from the Cross, and as they went on into their life, they must have become richly aware of how, in both these ways, their Lord had died for them. There were battles which they need not fight because He had fought them; there were other battles which they must fight all the more, but in which they certainly would be victorious because of His victory. There are some dark struggles from which we are forever released and exempted by His struggle; there are doubts, torments, agonies, which He underwent once for all, and we may pass them with unwounded feet and thankful hearts, as men walk free and happy over a battlefield where once their liberties were won in a long horrible day of fight and blood. Those burdens we are not to carry; that fight is not to be fought out again.

And there are other struggles which we *must* meet—fights with our sins, struggles to be pure and brave and true and kind and holy. From those He cannot save us. The shadow of His Cross, falling on them, is not obliteration but inspiration. We cannot be spared the doing of them by Him, but we can do them by Him, and that is better. See how complete is the salvation of the Cross for the man who is by the crucified Christ rescued from every suffering his soul can spare, and strengthened for every suffering and duty that his soul needs! By one sacrifice He hath perfected forever them that should be sanctified.

It seems so far off, that Cross of Jesus, and it is really so near! For it is lifted up on high so that the waves of time roll unheeded and unmeaning at its foot. It is the power of perfection for us to-day. We too may cast at its foot the burdens and the sufferings which we need not keep because our Lord has taken them; and in its light we may renew the fight with sin which we must fight, from which we cannot escape, but in which we shall surely conquer because our Lord has conquered. No soul ought to be carrying any weight or trouble which is really its Lord's, or ought to be discouraged in any task or trouble which is really its own.

The herb that brings forgetfulness,
And makes all wounds grow whole,
And sends God's peace to soothe and bless
The hopeless travailing soul,
And has immortal power to still
The fiercest wind and tide,
Springs at the foot of that dark hill
Where Christ was crucified.

The Holiest.

Heb. x. 19.—'Boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.'

The Temple in Jerusalem was a comparatively small building divided into two parts by a veil. The inner part 'within the veil' was called the Holy of Holies or Most Holy Place. The outer part simply the Holy Place. Then round the building were the Courts of the Temple. The people worshipped in the Courts; the priests ministered in the Holy Place. Only the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, and that only once a year, on the Great Day of Atonement. The writer of this Epistle shows that if we enter by the blood of Christ we can pass through the outer Courts into the Holy Place, and even into the Holy of Holies. We have boldness to enter into the holiest of all, into the very presence of God.

But do we all enter where we may? No, we do not. There are three classes of Christians.

1. There are the 'outer court' Christians. The distinctive feature of the outer court was its nearness to the outside world. It was just inside the Temple precincts; it had some sacredness about it; but we know its condition in the time of Jesus Christ. The fact is, it had become the prey of the special conditions which belonged to its position—its nearness to the commerce of the world. There was much noise there, but little religion. There was a strong savour of worldliness and merchandise about the proceedings carried on there, mere talk and gossip, developed into downright secularization and profanity. And our Lord took a scourge and drove out the money-changers and those who sold there, for the house of the Lord had become a 'den of thieves.' This was the place for discussions, half-worldly, half-religious, upon matters which lie on the disputed ground between the secular and the sacred. Sometimes our Lord joined in these discussions, and perplexed the teachers of the Law with problems too hard for them. Of this we have a record in the 5th and 7th chapters of St. John's Gospel.

We have here a picture of those who may be said to be loosely attached to the Christian Church, who never get beyond the outer court. There is much talk, discussion, noise, but little of true religion; there is much argument and criticism, but no worship; the spirituality of religion is wholly wanting; there is almost everything except that which the gospel came specially to bestow—personal fellowship with God through the Son by the Spirit. They are one remove from utter worldliness and unbelief; that is all that can be said in their favour. There is a link between them and religion sufficiently strong to keep them from rejecting it altogether, but not of such a nature as to bind them in a personal affection to the Saviour.

2. There are the 'Temple proper' Christians. In the Temple proper, the stately, orderly, formal worship of God took place. There was seen the cultivation and the expression of reverence, adoration, and decorum. The solemnity of the sanctuary was enhanced by the presence of symbols; ritual was an important part of the worship. Here we have a picture of another class of believers—a distinct advance upon the former; good, but not good enough. This, and something more, is required of those who would be true to the spirit of the gospel.

The reverence, solemn feeling, propriety, and devotion which found expression in the holy place are indispensable to true religion; but to proceed no further is to come very short of our vocation in the gospel. For we are called to the enjoyment of a personal relation, not mere formal and ritual acts of worship. It is true that the Jews, with a few glorious exceptions such as the Psalmists, dare not venture upon any more familiar relations with God; their unredeemed sins did not suffer them to 'draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace'; but as for us, 'seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens,' a closer relationship is now not only permitted, but enjoined, and we dishonour the mission of Christ if we proceed no farther than the Jews did under the Old Covenant.

Now, some people's religion does not extend beyond the limits of the formal services of the sanctuary; it misses the spirit of the gospel, for it is a *formal,* not a *family* relation. Even after the veil has been taken away, and we can behold the glory of the Lord with open face, they delegate still the highest functions of the soul to priest or sacrifice or liturgy—they never pray for themselves; they insist upon mediation, in direct contradiction to the word of the gospel: 'There is *one* God, *one* mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus'; and again: 'But he, when he had offered *one sacrifice for sins for ever,* sat down on the right hand of God.' The man who goes no farther than the formal service conducted by a third person, and makes no personal application of the parts of that service, supplemented by private communion with 'our Father,' comes far short of his privilege. He might have been a good Jew; he is a very poor Christian.

3. There are the 'Holy of Holies' Christians. In the Holy of Holies was a conspicuous absence of furniture. Few symbols were here, such as were found in the Temple proper—altar, table of shewbread, or golden candlestick; but it held the ark of the covenant, and the glory of the Lord. Here it was that God talked with man, revealed His will, gave His message, 'made his goodness pass before' His servant. The high priest here received that sacred authority over the people which was the sign that he had received a special gift of grace from God; here he was prepared for his life's mission, which was to lead the people in faith and holiness; the high priest was not fitted for his work except by a personal experience of the glory of the Lord.

'And he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever.' The historical functions of the priesthood have passed away, but the experiences in the holiest have become the privilege of all believers. 'Let us enter with boldness.' In a very real sense the experiences of Jacob, of Moses, of the writer of the Fortieth Psalm, of Isaiah, are ours if we will: 'we can see God face to face'; and until we have such an experience we are not fitted for life or work. 'The holiest' is where our faith is made strong by finding its true foundation in experience, which places the spring of faith beyond the analysis of the scientist and the worldling. Here the believer is furnished with the strongest argument for his belief.

> My God! I know, I feel Thee mine,
> And will not quit my claim
> Till all I have is lost in Thine,
> And all renewed I am.

When the argument of the sceptic and the satire of the scornful have died away into silence, a man with such an experience says:

> A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath the heart
> Stood up and answered, 'I have felt.'

Bunyan's pilgrim received a mark upon his forehead when he saw the vision of the Cross! An indelible mark—'the marks of the Lord Jesus'—is left upon the believer who enters 'into the holiest,' a mark upon his heart, affecting his work. 'I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. . . . And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.'

'Oh, the blessedness of a life in the Holiest!' exclaims Andrew Murray. 'Here the Father's face is seen and His love tasted. Here His holiness is revealed, and the soul made partaker of it. Here the sacrifice of love and worship and adoration, the incense of prayer and supplication, is offered in power. Here the soul, in God's presence, grows into more complete oneness with Christ, and into more entire conformity to His likeness. Here, in union with Christ in His unceasing intercession, we are emboldened to take our place as intercessors who can have power with God and prevail. Here the outpouring of the Spirit is known as an ever-streaming, overflowing river from under the throne of God and the Lamb. Here the soul mounts up as on eagles' wings, the strength is renewed, and the blessing and the power and the love are imparted with which God's priests can go out to bless a dying world. Here each day we may experience the fresh anointing with which we go out to be the bearers and the witnesses and the channels of God's salvation to men, the living instruments through whom our Blessed King works out His will and final triumph.'[1]

[1] A. Murray, *Let us Draw Nigh*, 17.

Dedication.

Heb. x. 20.—'The way which he dedicated for us' (RV).

CHRIST dedicated a way for us. We dedicate ourselves to Christ to follow in that way. What do we mean when we speak of dedicating ourselves? Dedication is a great word, which we are accustomed to utter with reverence. How noble it seems! How little it often signifies! What is the 'dedicated spirit,' and what does it involve?

In the first place, it must involve limitation. In young days we all have passed through a stage in which we understood the words of Robert Browning in *Pauline:*

> 'I am made up of an intensest life,
> . . . a principle of restlessness
> Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all.'

It is not long, however, in the case of all who are dirigible in the course of life, before we learn that this radiant vision is but the figment of young enthusiasm. It is not given to mortals to enter fully into every phase of life, and we soon discover too that we cannot know everything. The first requisite for a satisfactory dedication, then, is to select something which we *shall* know and think and feel and do. In other words, to mark out our province.

We want to help and bless our fellow-men, and we have not realized that it is impossible to do good to everybody. The result is often a life broken into fragments of good endeavour, and scattered over innumerable small attempts which neither link on with one another into any concentrated whole, nor, indeed, achieve any completeness even along their own various lines. Again it is necessary to mark out your province, by selecting those whom life has given you as the subjects of your special service. In a word, clear up the matter of your possibilities and your limits, and then work within these limits with all your might. Find out what you *stand for,* and stand for that. This is the first great law of dedication.

In this there is already involved the second consideration, namely, originality. We all desire to be original, but some try to be so in very curious fashions. One of the commonest of these fashions at the present time is that of achieving originality by contradicting obvious and proved truths. Anyone can do that without any great display of genius or much expenditure of effort. A considerable amount of what passes for genius and brilliancy in current literature turns out upon analysis to be little better than the exercise of this smart trick. Originality does not consist in differing from others, but in thinking things out for yourself. It matters little whether you agree with others or differ from them. Every truth that passes through your own personality, and goes out upon the world from you, will have something of that personality communicated to it and lingering in it. The great thing is that you should refuse the tyranny of fashion and the habit of thinking through other men's minds. 'Ye are bought with a price, be not the slaves of men.' The price has been bitter and costly in the lives of your comrades. At least answer it by shaking yourselves free, that you may stand independent and think for yourselves. Dedicate your life, not only to certain projects that you wish to accomplish, but to that point of view which is distinctively your own, and to that set of convictions which you have found to dominate your conscience.

In a word, find out what *you* stand for and stand for that.

Let us now ask what this means in four different departments of our life and interest.

1. *Personal Religion.*—In our personal religion dedication will link each of us with the historic Christian faith, and on the other hand it will discover for us what our individual aspect of Christianity must be.

On the one hand such a dedication necessarily involves the great loyalties. The faith of the fathers and the saints has a claim upon every dedicated spirit, and in our dedication we link ourselves on to that holy succession. 'What they believed, I believe; what they hoped, I hope; whither they are arrived, by Thy grace, I trust I shall come.' In these great words of Thomas à Kempis he has handed on to us a splendid formula for the expression of the supreme loyalties involved in all Christian dedication.

Yet, on the other hand, this dedication is one's own, and a man expects to perceive hidden

mysteries which no one else can see as he sees them, but whose vision is always more or less determined by his own spiritual powers as well as by his personal qualities and experience. Thus, even in the matter of belief, we cannot hope to retain all the details of the creed of those fathers and saints who have gone before us. In the swift changes of thought which accompany the development of the times, and which new learning must always necessarily produce, it is necessary that the statement and interpretation of Christian truth should be elastic enough to assume the necessary changes of form. We cannot dedicate ourselves to a point of view which was possible only to those who accepted the scientific and critical conceptions of, say, the fourteenth century or the fifth. The Christianity which claims us is that upon which the light of to-day is beating; and our testimony, while it will always revere the great testimonies of the past, cannot possibly be in all details identical with any of them.

As a matter of fact, there will be in a man's dedication to-day a double element. If it be as solemn and comprehending a thing as it ought to be, he will revere much that he does not literally believe; but, at the same time, he will have discovered a central core of living beliefs which mean absolutely everything to him. In the vestibule of a large and richly-built hotel, much frequented by business men, there were among many palms and other beautiful plants a collection of fine white marble statuary. The statues were reproductions for the most part of ancient Greek ones, and it was amusing to notice how these men, in a general sense prizing the beauty and the change from ordinary pursuits which the statues of that vestibule afforded them, yet passed out and in, busy upon a few vital interests of their own, not in the remotest degree connected with art of any kind. Such a vestibule is the entire creed of some men, crowded with fair but alien forms. It offers a bosky retreat for the spirit, but it has no connection with any vital interest of life. Doubtless in the creed of all men there will be such a vestibule, but the imperative thing is to discover what part of its beauty and its ideas are really vital to the life and thought of each one of us, and then to count that, and that alone, our living creed to which we dedicate our lives. In some this living core of faith still remains considerable in extent; in others it has been reduced to an extremely small number of statements. This central faith, found not now from dogma but in experience, and accepted without reserve, is at least enough for a man to live by.

2. *The Church.*—Next to personal religion in a day of dedication there must recur to all loyal spirits the thought of that organized expression of the Christian faith represented for them by the church with which they have been connected. The present time is one which should quicken all our church loyalties, and recall us to the greater thoughts of church life which have commanded the imagination of so many generations. The Church to-day is greater than she ever was before, and she retains all those possibilities of spiritual reality and effectiveness which led the Apostle of old to call her by the sublime name of the Body of Christ. That body is immortal and has the power of rising many times from the tomb. It may be buried, as it has been buried time and again, in the earth of formality and superstition and the ambitions of ecclesiastical men; but it will always rise again from the dead in some form or other, with new powers for meeting the exigencies of a new day.

The Church is like that temple of Philae which stood for many centuries on its island in the Nile, and to which pilgrims came from all quarters of the land to pray to the river god for floods and harvests. It stands there still, but it is now submerged. The raising of the waters by the great dam at Assouan has permanently and abundantly fulfilled the prayers that were offered there, and the temple has passed away in the fullness of the answer to its own prayers. So will it be with the Church of Christ. Those benefits to humanity for which the Church stood long ago, in days when there was no other institution which could supply them, have been in many instances taken over by other agencies, and to that extent the Church has ceased to be required. As in these instances she has been submerged in the fuller supply of her own gifts, so it may be that in the end all those spiritual blessings that she has brought to the earth will be supplied in fuller measure, and they that see the City of God will see no temple therein. But that day is still far ahead, and while man's need remains unsatisfied and his thirst unslaked, the

Church will ever stand upon the earth for the supply of the water of life.

3. *The Social Outlook.*—In such a day as this it is imperative that we should all realize as we never did before that no man liveth unto himself. Indeed, one of the chief effects of the War upon most men's minds has been the expansion of the idea of personality. We are personal within various circles of shorter or longer radius. The most intimate view of personality is that of the individual interests and purposes and destinies which are determined by our own personal and individual life. But there is also a personality which is determined by the conditions of home, the wider circles of friendship, of fellow-workmen, and so on; and beyond that there is the personality which is part of our society, and which is determined for each of us by the social, economic, and moral conditions of every other member of that society.

There is a certain city built upon several ridges of hill with deep hollows lying between them. The architects of former days bridged these hollows in order to provide a level street running from the suburbs to the centre of the city. By a kind of natural gravitation the misery and crime of the city sank to its lower levels, which became a sort of moral swamp or morass, festering with the decay of human life. But many of the citizens daily crossed the arches as they went to and fro from business, and thus managed to live apart from the wretchedness which had invaded their town. That city is like too much of our modern life. We have been content if we fulfilled respectably our duties to our smaller and narrower personality, and we all have our arches which permit us to remain in ignorance of disagreeable social facts. We have our comfortable houses, and we show them to our friends with pride, saying, 'My house.' Not until we have gone to the meanest hovel in our town, and heard amid its misery the voice of conscience say, 'This is your house,' have we faced the truth of modern life. The strike is your strike, the revolution is your revolution: and at the present day there is no hiding-place so remote or so secure that a man with any living conscience of Christianity can take refuge in it from the call of his fellow-men. Any dedication which, in a world like the present, omits all reference to social conscience and effort, will have a strange reception when it goes up to heaven as the fit offering of a man who owes his life to the blood and death and sacrifice of millions of labouring men.

4. *The International Situation.*—The widest circle within which to conceive of our personality is, of course, the international one. The war has done nothing to break down the loyalties of true patriotism, but it has demanded that patriotism shall be no longer exclusive. International problems are the business of every man who is capable of reading a newspaper, and until he has included them in his dedication he cannot in any case have completed it. Meredith says in a letter to Maxse, quoted in Viscount Morley's *Recollections:* 'What I wish is that you and I should look to the good future of men with some faith in it, and capacity to regard some phases of history without letting our sensations blind and bewilder us. I am neither German nor French, nor—unless the nation is attacked—English. I am European and Cosmopolitan—for humanity! The nation which shows most worth is the nation I love and reverence.'

The Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Heb. x. 21, 22.—'Having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near.'

To very many of us the Holy Communion would make a far greater appeal than at present it does, if only we could see in it our great opportunity of giving to God the worship and the self-devotion which we owe to Him. All religion worthy of the name involves sacrifice and sacrificial worship, and the Eucharist has been regarded from the first days of the Church as her characteristic sacrificial worship. It is not only the commemoration of Our Lord's sacrifice, it is the great means of pleading that sacrifice, and of taking part in that sacrifice. We do not communicate as we should, unless we have learned to do both.

But what do we mean by sacrifice? Sacrifice, in its deepest sense, means self-giving. Too often we think of sacrifice as if it were essentially connected with pain and death. But that is not so. Sacrifice may involve that, but it does not necessarily do so. Sacrifice may be a thing most joyous. When the bride on her wedding morning gives

herself to her husband, her sacrifice, if she loves him, is a sacrifice of pure joy. Moreover, even where sacrifice does involve pain and death, the joy may outweigh the pain. The Roman poet tells us that it is sweet and beautiful to die for our country, and many a patriot, we do not doubt, has felt it to be so. And if that be so with country, still more may it be so with God. Our own sacrifice to God is never perfect until we love to give it, let it cost what it may.

And be sure that that was so, and is so, with the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,' but He was also, and perhaps even more characteristically, a man of joys, acquainted, as no one else has ever been, with that purest of delights, perfect self-giving to the Father whom He loved. Do not confine the thought of our Lord's sacrifice to His passion and death; you will never understand the Eucharistic sacrifice if you do that. Our Lord's passion and death were the moral climax of His sacrifice; they showed how far in the path of loving obedience He was ready to go; but our Lord's whole earthly life was a sacrificial life, a life in which He ever gave himself freely, moment by moment, to do the Father's will; and His present heavenly life is a sacrificial life also. When St. Paul says that 'the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God,' his meaning surely is that our Lord's whole present existence is one in which He devotes Himself to the Father's purposes as fully as ever He did while He was with us upon earth. His death, of course, was a death died 'once for all'; it is an event of history which lies wholly in the past, and can never be repeated; but the mind and spirit which His death expressed, the mind of perfect self-giving, is our Lord's mind still, and it finds expression in our Lord's whole present activity on our behalf. So teach other writers of the New Testament also. When St. John says that our Lord 'is'—not merely was, but is—'the propitiation for our sins,' when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that He is 'an high priest over the house of God,' and that He appears 'now before the face of God for us,' they too assert the present continuance of our Lord's sacrificial activity. To give Himself to God for us is an abiding characteristic of our Lord; His very life consists in it; He would no longer be Himself if He did not do it.

That thought we must bring with us when we think of our Lord's presence in the Holy Eucharist. He is present, no doubt, that He may be our food. But He is present not as One dead, but as One living, and living to offer Himself in loving obedience to the Father. We, alas! may come to that holy feast with minds full of our own selfish schemes and desires, but He is in the midst of us as One with no selfish schemes and desires whatever, as One whose meat is, as it ever was, to do the Father's will and accomplish His work. If we receive His life into ourselves through the holy sacrament, we receive it as a sacrificial life, a life of frank self-giving; we receive it that our own selfish schemes and desires may be burnt out of us through the fiery touch of His eternal self-sacrificing love, and we become sacrifices to God as He is. And so you see that, though we come to receive, we receive in order that we may give, and we cannot truly receive unless we do desire truly to give. That casting of ourselves just as we are upon the grace and power of our Lord, in which faith chiefly consists, is a casting of ourselves upon Him for forgiveness and new life; but the new life is essentially a sacrificial life, and it is only through the continual giving of ourselves to God that we can possibly live it.

You see, then, what the Eucharistic sacrifice is. It is not a repetition of our Lord's sacrifice upon the Cross. The Eucharistic sacrifice is our Lord Himself, present, in answer to the Church's consecration prayer, in the fullness of His sacrificial life, and drawing us up into union with Himself, that we may give ourselves to God as He does. And thus it is that we understand that beautiful hymn:

> And now, O Father, mindful of the love
> That bought us, once for all, on Calvary's Tree,
> And having with us Him that pleads above,
> We here present, we here spread forth to Thee,
> That only Offering perfect in Thine eyes,
> The one true, pure, immortal Sacrifice.

You see how admirably that verse expresses the truth, our Lord 'bought us, once for all, on Calvary's Tree.' That climax of His perfect sacrifice we commemorate; we do not for one moment seek to repeat it. But, having our Lord

with us in His holy sacrament, we, as it were, present Him to the Father as our immortal and ever-living Sacrifice, we present Him as that One of our race who has ever yielded Himself, and ever does yield Himself, perfectly to the Father's will, and whose spirit of loving sacrifice we desire in Him perfectly to make our own. That we do not rise perfectly to His spirit as yet we know full well.

Look, Father, look on His anointed Face,
And only look on us as found in Him;
Look not on our misusings of Thy grace,
Our prayer so languid, and our faith so dim.

Yes! we as yet misuse God's grace by failing fully to respond to it; our prayer is languid, and our faith is dim. But nevertheless we are in our Lord as His members; we are going to communicate that we may be more fully one with Him; and so 'between our sins and their reward' we set our Lord's passion as the perfect example of that loving sacrifice that we too desire to give, and through Christ one day hope fully to give.

God's Faithfulness.

Heb. x. 23.—'He is faithful that promised.'

One of Catherine Marsh's friends, troubled with doubts and fears at the prospect of death, wrote to her; and her answer, from which the following is an extract, dispelled the doubts and calmed the fears.

'If I could only write one sentence, I think it should be 'He is faithful that promised.' Promised, 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.'

'On the assurance that "The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin," would I alone rest my hope, even if I had the holiness of the greatest saint, nay the holiness of all the saints put together. On that precious Blood, would I still rest my hope, even if I had the guilt of the greatest sinner, nay the guilt of all the sinners in the world put together. You see, beloved friend, the Lord Jesus Christ is the very soul of honour. He could not hold out a false hope, for He is the Truth.'[1]

[1] L. E. O'Rorke, *The Life and Friendships of Catherine Marsh*, 347.

Broken fortunes, broken hearts, broken hopes are often the result of broken promises. There is no more fruitful source of misery and disappointment. How many homes are shadowed because the promises made so solemnly before the altar on the marriage day have been ruthlessly violated! In ordinary life men appreciate the value of certainty. We want reliable timepieces, trustworthy architects, faithful servants, and faithful friends. In a certain valley in America there is a geyser which is known by the significant name of 'Old Faithful,' because it can always be relied on to jet forth its fountain at regular intervals. It has never been known to disappoint. In the concerns of the soul there is so much at stake that our confidence requires to be particularly well-grounded. As has been said, 'Faith ventures far, flies high, runs many risks, and has therefore need of a good security.' And good security she has—none better: 'He is faithful that promised.'

There is a passage in the biography of Hudson Taylor, which, in a very striking way, brings the thought of God's faithfulness into the actual experiences of modern life. Among the "treasures of darkness" that had come to Mr. Taylor in 1870 had been a new conception of the scope and meaning of faith, upon which a flood of light had been thrown by a passage in his Greek Testament. A letter to Mrs. Berger toward the close of that year of bereavement (November 18) showed that he had already made the discovery which was to be a mine of wealth through all his later life, but gave no clue as to how it had come about. It was just in his usual reading, as he often related, that he was struck with the words, *'Ekete pistin Theou.'* How strangely new they seemed! 'Have (or hold) the faithfulness of God': surely it was a passage he had never seen before? Turning to the corresponding words in English he read (Mark xi. 22): 'Have faith in God.' Ah, *that* was familiar enough; and something within him whispered, 'the old difficulty!' How gladly would he have faith in God and increase in it, if only he knew how! But *this* seemed entirely different. It laid the emphasis on another side of the matter in a way he found surprisingly helpful. It was not 'have' in your own heart and mind, however you can get it, 'faith in God,' but simply 'hold fast, count upon *His faithfulness*'; and different indeed he saw the one to be from the

other. 'Not my faith but God's faithfulness . . . what a rest it was!

And now, just five years later, the subject was filling his mind as he faced the seemingly impossible situation before the Mission. He knew that the impossibility was only seeming, and for his editorials in the new magazine had chosen the title 'China for Christ.' In the fourth of these papers, which dwelt upon the definite plan before the Mission for evangelising all the inland provinces, he wrote (November 1875):

Want of trust is at the root of almost all our sins and all our weaknesses; and how shall we escape it but by looking to Him and observing His faithfulness? . . . The man who holds God's faithfulness will not be foolhardy or reckless, but he will be ready for every emergency. The man who holds God's faithfulness will dare to obey Him, however impolitic it may appear. Abraham held God's faithfulness and offered up Isaac, accounting that God was able to raise him from the dead; Moses held God's faithfulness and led the millions of Israel into the waste, howling wilderness. Joshua knew Israel well, and was ignorant neither of the fortifications of the Canaanites nor of their martial prowess, but he held God's faithfulness and led Israel across the Jordan. . . . The Apostles held God's faithfulness, and were not daunted by the hatred of the Jews or the hostility of the heathen. . . . 'And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell' of those who, holding God's faithfulness, had faith, and by it 'subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises. . . out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens?'

Satan, too, has his creed: Doubt God's Faithfulness. 'Hath God said? Are you not mistaken as to His commands? He could not really mean just that. You take an extreme view, give too literal a meaning to the words.' . . . How constantly, and, alas, how successfully are such arguments used to prevent whole-hearted trust in God, whole-hearted consecration to God! . . . How many estimate difficulties in the light of their own resources, and thus attempt little and often fail in the little they attempt! All God's giants have been weak men, who did great things for God because they reckoned on His being with them. . .

Oh! beloved friends, if there is a living God, faithful and true, let us hold His faithfulness. . . Holding His faithfulness, we may go into every province of China. Holding His faithfulness, we may face with calm and sober but confident assurance of victory every difficulty and danger; we may count on grace for the work, on pecuniary aid, on needful facilities, and on ultimate success. Let us not give Him a partial trust, but daily, hourly serve Him, counting on *His faithfulness*.[1]

Provocation.

Heb. x. 24.—'Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.'

PROVOCATION is one of those sinister words that carry a sting. It is usually used in a venomous sense. What a provoking man he is! we say, what a provoking woman! She always calls out the bad that is in me, stirs the embers of my evil nature, irritates me, ruffles me, rubs me the wrong way. 'I'm provoked at that fellow'—a gentle way of expressing our resentment, only carrying the further idea that there is a legitimate reason for our ill-will, that he has wrought us a wrong and summoned up our slumbering sense of justice. The word, in its modern usage, bears this unfriendly meaning. And the Greek original in the passage before us is essentially strong—*paroxysmos*, our word 'paroxysm,' sharpening a weapon with a pointed, painful edge. It is used on three other occasions in the New Testament. When the great Apostle to the Gentiles went to Athens, we are told, 'his spirit was cut within him, as he beheld the city full of idols.' When a misunderstanding unfortunately arose between himself and Barnabas, it is called a 'sharp contention'—the same word being swept into service. And, in the immortal love lyric to the Corinthians, we read that 'love is not provoked.' This is the thought to which the word is, for the most part, attached in the sacred writings. It has a defiant aspect. But, in the verse before us, this aspect is removed as a mask. It beams down upon us with kindly regard. It comes with healing, not hurt, in its wings; with balm, not scourge and bleeding. We are not to incite to paroxysms of fear or passion. We are to affect each other acutely to love and good works, and to the joys and privileges of public worship.

[1] *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission*, 277.

How unfortunate that so many of our English derivatives have lost the fresh innocence of childhood! Instance our word 'charity.' It was at first a visitor most welcome—open, sincere, artless, friendly, gladsome. Much that we mean by love the Apostles meant by charity. To-day, however, the root has been beggared of its wealthy content and it has fallen from its envied pedestal. It has become well-nigh a verbal ruin. We tolerate it —that is all. We do not greet it gladly. It carries with it a disparaging intention. It denotes mainly the giving of alms. 'Cold as charity' do we not say? Thus also is it with this word 'provoke.' It means literally to call forth. But how much more beautiful to call forth the good rather than the bad, the bright rather than the dark, the noble rather than the selfish and malign. Chaucer says, 'Christianity provokes a man's better nature.' Cowper says, 'The sight provokes a smile.' Gray, in his 'Elegy,' asks, 'Can honour's voice provoke the silent dust?' And our writer here adds, 'Provoking one another to love and good works.' Let us, then, glance for a moment at this lofty plane to which he beckons us.

1. *Provoking to love.*—There are two words for love in the New Testament; the one used here, like the word for provoke, being the strong word. It is a word born within the bosom of revealed religion. There is no instance of its use in any heathen writer. It is more than superficial or sentimental; it is radical. It is a searching word. It reaches down to the roots of character. It is the word outlined by the Apostle in his matchless ode in First Corinthians, 'Love is not provoked.' There is a love which is provoked sometimes, but it is not this love. This love is above provocation. It is not simply an effeminate amiableness; it is a strong masculine crusade. It is God-like.

And we are to motive men towards this exalted and tranquil and long-suffering ideal. It is the call of the Christ. It was His *modus operandi.* The miner goes out in search of hid treasure. It is gold, not dross, that he seeks. Sometimes what looks the most unpromising yields the richest percentage. And there is wealth in the poorest-looking human stuff. The mission of Jesus was to mine it. He came to seek and to save what in us is lost, to lift into evidence the worth and the wealth that are hiding in the soul.

In men whom men condemn as ill
I find so much of goodness still,
In men whom men pronounce divine
I find so much of sin and blot,
I hesitate to draw the line
Between the two, when God has not.

The Master knew what was in man, and so He believed in him. After all, the only sure way of saving is the old, tried, and proven way of trusting and loving. Trust disarms hostility. Contempt of humanity was the arch-sin to Jesus. When Jesus wanted an illustration of iniquity in its scarlet distinctness He did not go, as we usually do, to the saloon or the slum. He went to the home of the Pharisee. To Him respectable sin was the great sin—pride, selfishness, hate, hard-heartedness, jealousy, malice, hypocrisy, unbelief, suspicion. 'Hath no man condemned thee? No man, Lord. Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.' Livingstone went unarmed through Africa, and was only once assailed. Stanley went primed and panoplied, and he had to blaze his way and mark it by little brooklets of blood. Treat men as thieves and they will steal; treat them as wolves and they will tear; treat them as dogs and they will bite. But treat them as children of the Father and they will respond splendidly to the lifting appeal; because, at bottom, the soul of man is sound. The deepest thing in the heart is its essential goodness. Men are not intrinsically base. They are inherently true and noble. The innermost reality is God, not sin. Never let your child see that you doubt his honour. It will paralyse his virtue. Mrs. Booth said that when she went to a criminal, she always appealed to his future, not to his past. There is an old French proverb which says that he who would labour for his fellow-men must see as little as possible of them. This was not the estimate of Tennyson when he wrote, 'Utter knowledge is utter love.' Jesus did not doubt Mary Magdalene. He never despaired of any. His gracious procedure was by way of encouragement.

'Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but nurture them.' 'Nourish them.' It is the tender plant that needs nurturing. The word has a warm, gentle, healing touch. It denotes a fostering solicitude. Husbands, love your wives, for 'no man ever hated his own flesh; but nour-

isheth and cherisheth it.' It is a home word, and love is the law of the home. The raw, chill atmosphere of fault-finding is fatal in the home. Elsewhere we read, 'Fathers, provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged.' To discourage is to harden, to solidify, to seal up, to check, to silence, to crush, to destroy. To nurture is to train, to lead out, to educate, to cause to flow in warm, evoking, life-giving virtue. In mining, quicksilver is utilized to separate the precious metal from the ore. The mercury runs about, lays hold of what is valuable, and extracts it. Then, with the application of heat, its grip is loosened and the bullion is detached. We, too, should be balls of mercury, ever on the alert for what is priceless and superlative in the heart of man.

Down in the human heart,
Crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried
That grace can restore.
Touched by a loving hand,
Wakened by kindness,
Chords that are broken
Will vibrate once more.

2. *Provoking to good works.*—'Beautiful' works, rather! To hearten is to put heart into. And this is our calling. We are to urge each other to the doing of beautiful things.

And the method suggested is by way of encouragement. How much failure to-day is due to simple loss of courage! How many give up through sheer dispiritedness! It is not sin that kills; it is despair. Almost any lapse can be recovered, if only there be heart and hope and willpower left. John Bunyan makes the pilgrim meet every conceivable obstacle in his journey to the City Celestial, but the difficulty most intimidating was Giant Despair. When Pilgrim met this Goliath he thought very seriously of retracing his steps. And this most surely he would have done had he not discovered a little key in his bosom, called Hope. When hope is gone, all is gone. When hope fades, the vision is lost. This it is that is the meaning of our present-day suicide epidemic. 'No use trying,' the *felo-de-se* says. But how foolish! How wickedly false! Man, cast down into the depths and crushed, there is every use trying. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Jehovah. . . . O Israel, hope in Jehovah! For with Jehovah there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.'

The world to-day is pining for encouragement. It is a tonic the heart of man loves. Sir Walter Scott was shy and diffident as a lad. It was said at school that he was even stupid. But the day the boy met Burns was his birthday. Burns read some lines he had written, then, patting him on the head, said, 'You'll be a man yet, ma laddie.' Little Walter, we are told, went home and wept for joy. What now could daunt him? Had not the idol of his day regarded him? When Byron's mother called her boy a 'lame brat,' she was endowing him with a heritage of hate. 'Your mother is a fool,' said a playmate to the limping lad one day. 'I know it,' replied the future poet, and burst into tears. Schopenhauer's mother was jealous of him and hated him cordially. These would be coarse, rough treatments in the training of a colt. How infinitely more so in the culture of a soul. The more delicate the adjustment, the more easily it is damaged. It is because the equilibrium of the collodion is unstable that the photographer makes his negative. And some have natures so mobile and impressible that often a mere handshake will change their whole lives, just as a current of hydrogen gas passing over a piece of polished platinum will take fire, or the touch of a feather cause the iodide of nitrogen to explode. Wonderful, indeed, are the transformations in the laboratory of the chemist, but they are as nothing to those in the laboratory of the soul. It was Benjamin West, was it not? who said, 'A kiss from my mother made me a painter.' Have you ever seen a radiometer? It is an instrument for measuring radiant energy. It consists of a number of light discs blackened on one side and placed in an exhausted glass vessel. And it is so sensitive to light that, when even a match is struck in the room where it is placed, the arms begin to rotate. Even so a look sometimes, especially if it be a look of love, a thought, a memory of home and mother, a prayer for one far distant, or a song in the night, will not infrequently turn the footsteps into the paths of righteousness.

In the Life of Duncan Matheson, who served as an evangelist in the Crimean War, we read that during the siege of Sebastopol he went home

one night sad and weary from his work among the suffering soldiers. But as he went the stars came out, and instinctively he began to sing one of the Scottish Paraphrases—

How bright these glorious spirits shine!
Whence all their white array?
How came they to the blissful seats
Of everlasting day?

Lo! these are they from suff'rings great,
Who came to realms of light,
And in the blood of Christ have wash'd
Those robes which shine so bright.

Next day he met a soldier, who had been on his way to commit suicide when he heard the words familiar to him from his youth. The soldier returned to his tent, resolved, as he told the evangelist, 'to seek the one thing needful.'

Public Worship.

Heb. x. 25.—'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.'

'WHAT greater calamity,' says Ruskin, 'can fall upon a nation than the loss of worship! Then all things go to decay. Genius leaves the temple to haunt the senate or the market. Literature becomes frivolous. Science is cold. The eye of youth is not lighted by hope of other worlds, and age is without honour. Society lives for trifles, and when men die we do not mention them.'

It was Christ's own custom to attend the synagogue every Sabbath day, and to observe the festivals. It was plainly His will that His followers should unite for worship as for work, and find in their worship the best stimulus for their work. And from the beginning common worship has been one of the primary purposes and functions of Christian society. The reality and depth of the Church's spiritual life has always been manifested, not only in its philanthropic and missionary activities, but in the sustained fervour and dignity of its public worship.

In his famous and epoch-making address to a class of Divinity students sixty years ago, Emerson said, 'No man with his thoughts about him can go into one of the churches of our land without feeling that what hold public worship had on man is gone or is going.' It was not the first nor the last time that a passing mood has been mistaken for an inevitable and permanent tendency. There are at least a few things which do not change in sixty or in six-hundred years, that are as old and as new as the dawn of day and the flowers of spring. Forms of worship may pass away—the worship of fear and propitiation, the worship of propriety and mere ceremony—not the worship of gratitude, penitence, trust, aspiration, consecration, communication; not the worship which is the natural and direct expression of the highest and best life of mankind.

1. We reckon the life poor and incomplete which has no appreciation of beauty, no taste for poetry, no love of music, no sympathy with the interpretation of the pathos and tragedy of the world. But infinitely meaner and smaller is the life which has no sense of kinship to God, and from which the worshipful temper and attitude are absent. To everyone who lives a truly human and Christian life the experience which our text calls the assembling of ourselves together is one of the everlasting necessities, both a duty and a delight. Man was made as little to worship alone as to live alone. The familiar sentence that religion is a matter between the soul and God is one of those half-truths in which indolent or narrow minds often take refuge. The universal experience of the best part of mankind proves that private worship, although a blessed resource, is not enough; that our finest feelings and thoughts need the stimulus of society; that the individual life is not sufficient of itself; that to reach the best it must be joined to other lives; that religion is a social function as well as a private aspiration; that the tie which binds us to God binds us to all the children of God; and that in the secret and sacred silence of the mind and heart, where we are most truly ourselves, we are at the same time as truly a part of the great human family.

2. At the beginning of the last century the minister was the chief, and often the sole, religious teacher of the community, and the sermon almost the one weekly intellectual refreshment of people's lives. But we are living in a time entirely different. If it is mere mental excitement and stimulus people want, or mere information concerning Biblical and theological questions, as distinct from the moral and religious impression of instruction,

then they can often get it better outside than within the Church. The press is restricting—naturally and healthily restricting—the old scope and range of the pulpit, but it can never imitate the wonderful element of personality on which the moral and spiritual direction of human lives seems to depend. It can never stand in place of those who speak, with the power born of personal insight and experience, as the messengers of God to men. Nor can any amount of the best private reading supersede the necessity of the assembling of ourselves together, or even justify making the sermon of least account, for, when it is what it ought to be, it is as worshipful as any other part of the service, lifting the mind and heart to God and the things of God.

3. Other associations may well fill a large place, and do a noble and necessary work in our world, but none of them can take the place of the Christian congregation, of the worshipful Church, whose walls are salvation and whose gates are praise. What other form of association, what other fellowship, can meet our deepest needs and highest requirements; can fill, protect and sustain our moral ideals, against which our passions and apathy are constantly arrayed; can compel us to live face to face with the Divinest meanings and aspects of our life; can stand between us and the mean choice; can idealize our common work; can nourish the spirit of truth and justice and love which we need to take into our daily duties; can touch with vitalizing power the spring of noble conduct; can strengthen us for hours of critical strain and trial; can hallow joy and comfort sorrow; can transfigure death and give us the sense of universal and eternal relationships? What other fellowship can do this for us like the Christian Church, wherever it is faithfully fulfilling its providential mission?

4. But nothing short of a clear and general recognition of the idea that the assembling of ourselves together is the symbolical expression of something which all men owe to God will restore to religion and the Church the rightful and natural authority which in many places they have lost. Apart altogether from the profit or pleasure it may yield, apart altogether from the attraction of this or that particular church or particular ministry, worship is a duty which is involved in all our relations to God, a visible act of homage due to Him, and binding not only on those who believe themselves to be genuinely Christian, but upon men and women everywhere who know God to be their Creator, Preserver, and Father, their Redeemer and Judge. It is because people fail to look upon public worship in the light of a sacred obligation and think of it as something which rests entirely upon private taste, private inclination, private want, that the Church is so widely regarded as an institution to be patronized if its attractions are sufficient, or as a by-play whose claims may be lightly set aside as soon as they come into conflict with some more absorbing interest or pleasure. It is a prevalent idea, even among serious persons, that the supreme object or end of public worship is to receive benefits and favours; to get, not to give; to be blessed and helped by hymn and music and prayer and sermon; or, at the most, to offer petitions for those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as for the soul. But an audience met to look and listen, to be pleased and profited, whose only conception of the assembling of themselves together is their own enjoyment, or even a company of devout people met in the House of God for confession and supplication, seeking their God only for what they can get, cannot truthfully be described as a congregation of worshippers.

5. Public worship is not merely a duty which we owe to God, not merely something which He requires and expects from His children, something in which He Himself finds pleasure and joy. God may be infinitely more than personal, but we are sure that He is not less. Love, whether Divine or human, cries for answering love. We hear much —and not too much—of man's need of God, but in its sweet human way the Bible has much to say concerning God's need of man; and how little we hear of that! The Patriarch Job had a Diviner thought of God than many of us when he rested his hope of deliverance on the need which his Maker had of him. 'Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands' is an assurance which harmonizes with the intimations of our own nature and life, with the teaching of the immortal parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Son, and with the whole life and spirit of Jesus Christ. You

remember the old mediæval story which Browning has retold in our time, a romance of deep truth, of the 'young monk and his boyish hymn, his little human praise' which God missed amid the hallelujahs of saints and angels. It is only a vision, but it brings us nearer to the Divine reality of things than many representations of God which we may think grander and more philosophical.

We should not get the less
That we remembered more
The truth and righteousness
Thou keep'st for us in store:
In heaven they do not pray—they sing,
And they have wealth of every thing.

And it would be more meet
To compass Thee with song
Than to have at Thy feet
Only a begging throng
Who take Thy gifts, and then forget
Alike Thy goodness, and their debt.

So give me joyous Psalms,
And Hymns of grateful praise:
Instead of seeking alms,
A song to Thee I'll raise:
Yet still I must a beggar be,
When lauding Thy great charity.[1]

Wilful Sin.

Heb. x. 26.—'For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins' (RV).

THERE are some passages of Scripture which perplex souls, and this is one; many read it and tremble. They feel and know that since conversion to God they have again and again sinned with their eyes wide open, and from these words they conclude that there is no hope for them. It will be well therefore to consider the passage carefully and to learn what it means.

James Fraser of Brea tells us that when a boy he feared he had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and that he took a Concordance to go over the passages in the Word which described it, looking specially under the word 'sin,' and being terribly distressed at the verse in Hebrews x. 26: 'If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment.'

1. When we study the context we see how in it we have the great Sacrifice of Christ presented to our view. That Sacrifice is sufficient; it was the offering of the Son of God made flesh, and it can cleanse effectually. It is final, no repetition is needed, it was offered once for all, and was accepted once for all, when the Offerer, who was Himself the Sacrifice, sat down at the right hand of God. It is final, for its virtue lasts for ever. It is effectual, for it accomplishes everlasting results. Sins are remembered no more, the whole character becomes changed and boldness is given 'to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way.' So, as we read, there rises up before us the great Atoning Sacrifice in all its glory, fullness, and completeness. No longer on the Cross, but in the heavens, it stands eternal and unchangeable, for ever efficient and effectual.

Now the writer's eye is turned from the Sacrifice to man. These Hebrew Christians were dallying with the old. They were turning from the Christ, the great Reality, the true Sacrifice, back to the pictures of the Mosaic Law. They were seeking peace in offerings that needed repetition year by year, and then could not take away sins nor change the character and life, rather than in the great Fulfiller of those sacrifices offered once for all. They were building their hopes on the passing, and forsaking the eternal; trusting to bulls and goats rather than to the Word made flesh. Therefore having shown them Christ, Son of God and Son of man, Apostle, High Priest, Seal and Pledge of the New Covenant, the one Sacrifice for Sins for ever, the writer solemnly exhorts them: Let us hold fast the faith we have professed. Let us help one another and stimulate each other's love and zeal. Let us keep together, acting not as deserters from the colours, but as good soldiers who by their ordered discipline add strength to the whole body and give victory to the King. Let us shun a very real and very present danger. 'For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins.'

The danger is that they should turn their backs on Christ and move away from Him. If they

[1] Walter C. Smith.

do—What? There remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins. Obviously there does not if the previous statements are true. It is an arithmetical fact which cannot be denied. It is a simple subtraction sum. Take one from one and there is nothing left, there is no remainder. Strike out the Sacrifice of Christ and what other can be found in all the universe? The sacrifices of bulls and goats had fulfilled their purpose and had merged in Him. Now they had gone, Christ alone is left. Strike out the Christ; there is left—nothing. No sacrifice is left in all the universe that can avail with God; there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins. Subtract one from one and the result is nothing. It always has been, it always is, and it always will be. One sacrifice for sins has been offered and accepted, turn away from it and no other is left to rest on; hunt heaven and earth, search time and eternity, no other sacrifice can anywhere be found.

2. But while the passage is plain about this, we must not read into it what is not there, and it never says that the virtue of the one, the sufficient, the final, the eternal, the effectual Sacrifice has died away and is lost. That abides for ever. But those who turn their backs upon the one Sacrifice can nowhere find a second. The blood of the Passover Lamb was, under the Law, to be sprinkled on the lintel above the door and on the posts at the side of the door, but not on the threshold below the door, evidently that no careless foot should tread upon that which was being used for a holy purpose. Let all those who will to sin take heed. As they move away from Christ and from His Cross they tread under foot a greater Sacrifice, a worthier blood, the Son of God Himself. They count the blood of the Covenant, the blood that rendered it valid and had sealed it as for ever true and effective, as of no account, a mere common thing; they heap insults on the Holy Spirit of God who had shown that Sacrifice to them and had led them to it. As they move away they wander forth into the night without a sacrifice and without a Saviour, and without a possibility of finding one, for there is none to find; no second sacrifice exists in all the universe. They wander forth into the night travelling their self-willed way, journeying onwards, not to a second sacrifice which may take the place of that which they leave, but rather to the Judgment of the Great Just King, which must needs await those who despise His love and mercy; to the fiery indignation when 'the Eye of everlasting righteousness' will open upon their guilt, when God will look upon them; and 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

Yet still, as they wander forth, the One Sacrifice remains. It was offered for sins for ever, the rejection of it by the sinner does not nullify it or subtract from its sufficiency. Man may tread under foot the Son of God and treat Him as of no effect, but God does not. The Sacrifice once offered, once accepted, remains before God for ever, sufficient and effectual. Even as the wilful sinner wanders forth upon his headstrong path the cry of mercy follows him, the voice of the Crucified pleads with him, 'If thou wilt return, return unto Me'; 'Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.' The very blood they trample on still remains the atonement for sin, and the seal of the covenant of which the foundation promise is, 'Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.'

And if any of us are for turning away, leaving the Sacrifice, offered once for all and for ever, in search of something 'more in accordance with the enlightened spirit of the age,' the warning still holds good. There is no second Sacrifice.

Before I turn my back upon the Christ I may well pause and ask, 'What shall I do with my sins?' Light shows the dirt but does not remove it. A true light, whether of the twentieth or of any other century, will show what is wrong in life and character, but will not cleanse it. 'What shall I do with my sins? What shall I do with my unalterable past?' No light, no knowledge, no machinery, no civilization, no philosophy, no enlightened theory, no conscience can alter even yesterday. What shall I do without a Sacrifice when undeniable sin lies behind and the intolerable Eye of holiness lies in front? What shall I do? Even now across the centuries, even to us, there comes a cry from Calvary—Return unto Me. The Sacrifice once offered stands eternally.

Eternal Punishment.

Heb. x. 31.—'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

In Mr. A. H. Craufurd's *Recollections of James Martineau* (1903), p. 105, it is told how the saintly

Bishop Ewing of Argyll and the Isles, speaking of the extreme fear expressed by many people at the idea of falling into the hands of God, once remarked, 'I wonder in whose hands they think that they *now* are.'

This was a text on Cromwell's lips as he lay dying. He repeated it three times solemnly and earnestly.

Men sometimes give up their Christian faith because they cannot accept the doctrine of eternal punishment. But it is important to remember that Christianity did not introduce this doctrine; indeed, religion did not introduce it. The natural forebodings of the human heart, the anticipations of what shall be in the future, the dread of that which is unseen, the conviction of the consequences of sin—these are the foundations of the belief in an endless punishment beyond this life, and they are discovered not only in every religion, but in every speculative system, whether it be religious or not. Tartarus and Hades and Sheol are not creations of the Christian imagination, or the results of Christian doctrine. The great Christian poet, in his vision of hell, has conceived punishments, awful indeed and eternal, but they are matched by the torments which the heathen imagination invented; so terrible, inevitable, and lasting seem the consequences of sin to every mind which has realized its nature. Nothing can be less true than to say that eternal punishment is the invention of priestcraft, of impostors eager to retain their hold on the fears and superstition of their followers. The widespread belief in hell is in truth but the result of man's experience of sin. Philosophy and science know nothing of forgiveness, of recovery, of conversion. Sin is displayed in the natural course of things as going from bad to worse, as gradually invading the whole character, and subduing to itself all that at first was opposed to it—all impulses of good, all hesitations and remorse. We do not, indeed, often witness the complete degradation, the utter defilement, of the whole nature by sin, but sometimes we are allowed to trace it as far as it can be traced in this life; and we do know in ourselves, and we can surmise in others, how any sin, indulged and unchecked, tends to absorb the mind and harden the heart till that condition is conceivable which our Lord describes in the awful words 'eternal sin.' For that is the true conception of hell, not an arbitrary punishment, inflicted from without, unconnected, except as penalty, with the sin, but sin itself, unchanged and unchangeable, sin which has transformed the whole man, sin realized at last in its full horror, but realized when it is impossible to turn away from it and put it away. To be fixed and rooted in such a state as this is eternal punishment, or, as it is called in another awful phrase, 'eternal destruction from the face of the Lord'; and it is foreshadowed and anticipated by the experience of the human mind, as it dwells on its own sin, and learns something of the inner history of other men.

1. Christianity, then, did not introduce the doctrine of eternal punishment; and Christianity has modified and lightened it. The revelation of the love of God in Christ has shown us a way of escape which natural religion could never have discovered: some, at least, of the human race will be delivered from the results of their sin, for though all are sinners, and therefore, according to mere experience, all are involved in the fatal chain of necessary consequences, Christianity tells us of redemption, of the will of God that all should be saved, of salvation through Christ. The gospel indeed raises the standard to be reached far higher than any other religion had imagined, but the gospel also tells us of the grace and strength whereby we may reach it; of late repentance and full acceptance; of God the Father of all, the lover of souls. Indeed, it is the very beauty and tenderness of Christianity that have led men to doubt it; it is the revelation of God as love that has made the doctrine of punishment incredible to some; the message of salvation has overpowered in men's minds the previous terrors of hell. Our Lord has Himself given us the weapon with which His teaching is assailed, and the gospel, which alone has brought to us the conviction of God's love, is attacked as inconsistent with that love. Christ, it is true, tells us of punishment, of the undying worm and unquenchable fire; but it would have needed no Divinely authorized declaration to reveal these things but for that other revelation of forgiveness, and mercy, and redemption, and love which He alone has made, which He alone could make.

2. When the question is asked, What then does

Christianity teach on this subject? we must be careful to distinguish between the unauthorized fancies of individuals and the deliberate and formal judgments of the Church, or the definite declarations of Scripture. Since the Christian era men have speculated, as they speculated before it, on the nature of future punishment; but we ought not to look to Dante or Milton or Calvin, still less to individual writers or preachers of our own time, for definitions of what the Church has left undefined, for accurate descriptions of what some of the greatest Christian theologians have refused to describe. Terrible things have been said, and said by men of deserved authority, but none the less they are not the declarations of the Church of Christ, for they are not the declarations of Christ Himself. The Church has even hesitated to press far our Lord's own sayings on this subject. Thus, when He speaks of the punishment of fire, the Church has not held that this must be taken literally; for all who realize God must feel that of all possible pains the pain of the conscious loss of God's presence must be infinitely the most dreadful. And it is certain that the future state of our bodily nature is inconceivable by us, so that no ideas drawn from our present bodily pains can be literally applicable to future punishment. We may, then, following the guidance of the Church, interpret our Lord's words metaphorically. Long before men's feelings were so keenly alive as they are now to physical suffering, and to the terrors of future punishment, great Church writers declared that the pains of hell were not to be understood as corporeal torments; that, in the words of one, the 'everlasting fire is not material fire like ours, but such as God knoweth'; or, as another says, the worm and the fire are the conscience of sinners; or, as St. Augustine holds, the essence of eternal death is 'alienation from the life of God.' Thus by the instinct of the Church, that is, the general consent of the spiritual minds of all ages, it has been seen that these awful words of our Lord may be metaphors, images, and figures adapted to our comprehension, descriptions for our warning, of the indescribable consequences of sin. And it is unwarrantable, therefore, to build upon these sayings elaborate and terrifying descriptions of future torments: it is unwarrantable, and it is unnecessary; for the real terror of the revelation of punishment consists in the thought of 'eternal *sin*,' eternal brooding upon the evil which has hidden God from the soul, and yet will not be put away.

3. Again, one great trouble to those who venture to think on this awful subject is the belief that of all those whom we know and love, and of all those whom we have reverenced though we never saw them, of all the thousands whom we see moving and living about us, filling in the scenery of this world with eager and stirring life, of all these the greater part will be lost. So men have fancied; and, indeed, there are tremendous words of warning—'many are called, but few chosen'—few there are who find the narrow way of life, while many go in by the wide gate and the broad way that leadeth to destruction. But we are told nothing definitely of the exact proportion of the lost to the saved, and when the question was put directly to our Lord He would not answer it. 'Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.' We are not to know. Our own duty, the struggle and conflict to continue in the narrow way, lies before us: the rest is hidden in the secrets of the Divine purpose. Therefore the Church has refused to dogmatize on this topic also. Of all the millions who have passed through this life into the presence of their Judge, not one is declared by any authoritative human voice to be lost. They are in God's hands, and their destiny is hidden from our eyes. Warnings, indeed, there are, and are they not necessary? But we know nothing save what God has been pleased to reveal to us, and this He has not revealed.

4. So if we scrutinize the Bible and the declarations of the Church, paying no heed to what is of mere private authority, we shall find, not indeed that punishment is less solemn, less tremendous, a thing, but that it is less incredible, less shocking to the mind, than it has been made to appear by the fancies and the fears of men. But though Christianity does not say that future punishment is necessarily corporeal, nor that we must believe that the greater number of mankind will be lost, yet neither does it dare to dogmatize, as many do, on the other side. We are *not* told in any certain

or definite manner that there is any further probation after this life; we are *not* told that, when a soul has persisted in sin till the whole character is transformed by evil, and grace has worked upon it in vain, and the great moment of death itself has had no power to recall it to God, we are *not* told that with such a soul God's love, God's grace, will ever at last prevail. The punishment which awaits it hereafter *may* conceivably have the effect which in this life punishment by itself never has—the effect of winning back the soul to its Creator; it *may*, but we are not told so. And we dare not go beyond what is written; we cannot take one part only of God's character, and build our hopes on that, and leave aside His justice, His righteousness, His wrath against sin. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the *living* God'; for the God with whom we have to do is not a mere quality, or even a collection of qualities, not a tendency or a law, which can be traced and measured and comprehended, but He is a *living* God, and it is His life, His personality, His character, that we have to fear as well as to love. Were He benevolence or mercy alone we could understand the easy security of some who seem to know exactly what He will do, but He is a *living* God, and that Divine life cannot be bounded by any thoughts of ours, or be conformed to our preconceived ideas. A person, a living man, shows himself to be such by his whole nature and character, by his love of what is lovely, his hatred of the hateful, his will, his purposes, his energy, his mercy, his righteousness; and the *living* God whom we worship must likewise hate sin and love goodness, and His purposes must be infinite as are His wisdom and His will, because He is living. We dare not, therefore, trust the assurances of His mercy alone, and disregard the sternness and the terror of His revelation of Himself. We know indeed that He loves the world, and would have all men saved and brought to the knowledge of the truth; but our conviction of that love ought to be the measure of our sense of sin and of its infinite consequences. If the love of God paid such a price for our redemption, what must the sin be which brought about the death of Christ? Can any punishment be too great, too terrible, for that sin? Can any Christian, recognizing the full meaning of the gospel of Christ, knowing in his own life the power of sin, and contemplating on the Cross the result of sin, can any Christian feel secure? 'God is love,' but His love was shown in giving His only-begotten Son to die for our sins; so tremendous is the power of the sin against which He has declared His wrath. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the *living* God.'

5. It can scarcely be doubted that if a man weighs dispassionately and honestly all that is revealed to us on this subject; if he considers the warnings of Scripture, the glimpses given us of the 'wrath of God,' yea, even of the 'wrath of the Lamb,' of the judgment-day, of the future world; if he turns his eyes to his own sin, and its growth, its power, its absorbing character, its fascination; if he remembers his falls, his recoveries, his relapses; if, further, he traces out the life histories of those whom he knows, and sees evil laying hold of some of them with a relentless grasp, and all of them weak and insecure, with much sinfulness in their goodness, with mixed motives and vague purposes; and if he reflects on the continuance of all this from the beginning of human history, and on the perpetual, widespread, instinctive dread of future punishment—it can scarcely be doubted that such an one will feel that the balance is on the side of warning, and will arise with a fresh sense of the awfulness of life and its issues.

But then there is the other side—the revelation of love, of mercy, of free forgiveness and redemption. What shall we say to these things? Did not Christ refuse to reveal more than He has revealed, or to tell how many shall be saved; and cannot we be content to own how little we know? Even in this life, when the light of experience is shed on every corner and turn in human existence, we know but little of the real depths of the heart, even of our own; we know not how God is making Himself known to the sinful, the ignorant, the dull, the indifferent; we know not how He works with the soul in the final conflict of death. And then the curtain falls, and of that other world, with its forces and its opportunities, its inhabitants, and their condition before God, what do we know? Practically nothing. When all that makes our experience, time and space and bodily faculties and society and this familiar scene, are stripped away, what is left? What *can* we know? If, then, there seems to be a contradiction between one

aspect of God's revelation and another, between His love and His justice, His forgiveness and His wrath, can we wonder? There is a similar contradiction between our own free will and God's omnipotence, between time and eternity, space and infinity. Whenever we urge our faculties beyond the limits appointed for them, we stumble against contradictions, impossibilities, insoluble problems. The wisest of English Divines has laid the most stress upon human ignorance, and has told us of 'the infinitely absurd supposition, that we know the whole of the case.'[1] 'All our knowledge,' as another has said, 'consists of fragments; what we know of God's justice is a fragment, what we know of His mercy is a fragment also. *We* do not stand at the point "where mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other," and it may well be literally impossible for us to understand the revelation of complete truth, even if God had vouchsafed to make it. There are the warnings and the terrors, the certainty that sin and its punishment are, in any case, far more awful than anything we can conceive; and there are the hopes and consolations, the conviction of God's love in Christ, the certainty that none will be lost whom God can save, without destroying in them His own gift of free will.'[2] These things are for our guidance; and the light falls on the path that is just before us, and grace is given to us to strive to enter in at the narrow gate, and what is beyond and above us we can be content to leave in the hands of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For though, after thinking of these things, we can but own that 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,' that same thought of the *Life* of God is the ground of our trust, the assurance of our 'trembling hope.' 'For therefore we both labour and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men.'

Be near me when my light is low,
  When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
  And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of Being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame
  Is rack'd with pangs that conquer trust;
  And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And Life, a fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,
  And men the flies of latter spring,
  That lay their eggs, and sting and sing,
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,
  To point the term of human strife,
  And on the low, dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day.[1]

[1] Butler, *Analogy*, pt. ii. ch. 5.

[2] Pusey, *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment*, 22.

Self-Possession.

Heb. x. 34.—'Knowing that ye yourselves have a better possession and an abiding one' (RV).

THE Revised Version has rightly struck out the intruded words 'in heaven,' but in the judgment of some it would have done still better if the renderings in its text and margin had changed places. The latter reads 'knowing that ye have your own selves for a better possession,' and suggests a deep though somewhat unusual thought, namely, that a Christian, and only a Christian, really owns himself. The same thought is repeated a few verses later, where we read of 'them that believe unto the saving of the soul,' or, as is the more accurate rendering, 'to the acquiring (or "possession") of the soul.' The soul is gained by faith, and the believer has himself for a possession. Is not that exactly what Jesus said?—'In your patience ye shall possess your souls.' And is not the same thought, that a man never has himself but when he is trusting to Jesus Christ, expressed in the other solemn words: 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' What awful future retribution by external conditions may be included in that stern phrase we know not now, and God grant that none of us may ever know! But, whatever these conditions may be, let us not forget that the tragic fate dimly shadowed in the phrase is primarily an inward experience, the loss not only of blessedness, but of self.

1. We possess ourselves *by self-control*. Popular language goes on that assumption, for he who has the mastery of inclinations, emotions, and passions is called 'self-possessed,' which is just

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, xlix.

to say that he who governs himself by temperate reason, firm will, and pure conscience, and only he, owns himself. A drunkard resolves against his vice, and a whiff of the smell of drink shatters his resolutions. Does he own himself? No; his tyrannous craving dominates, and, in a very deep sense, 'he cannot call his soul his own.' His reason, his will, his conscience, are all drowned out of sight by the flood of ungoverned passion that comes rushing from his indulged animal appetite, like winter torrents from the recesses of the hills covering fertile lands with hideous slime and sterile gravel. 'Whoever committeth sin is the slave of sin,' and slaves belong not to themselves but to their owners.

2. We possess ourselves *when we sacrifice ourselves.* From a selfish point of view it is a mistake to make self our aim and centre. 'Who pleasure follows, pleasure slays,' says the poet. The surest way to gratify and satisfy all that is good in myself is to put the satisfaction of self out of sight and to yield myself up to something higher and nobler. Whoever makes self the aim of his vision and of his effort thereby defeats his own end and ceases to possess himself. The poignant joys that thrill in a heart inflamed by enthusiasm for any great cause are nobler and rarer by far than any which are experienced on the low levels of self-indulgence. The secret of self-possession and of happiness is self-oblivion.

3. But the perfection of self-government and of self-oblivion is attained *when the heart has yielded itself to Jesus Christ,* and, smitten by His great love, like Moses' rock has flowed out in a gush of self-surrender to Him. So he who gives himself utterly away in will and affection and obedience to Jesus thereby first truly owns himself. For he will have new power of self-control, and to him will come the deep joy of enthusiasm for the living Person of Incarnate Perfection; and all the blessedness that wells up from lower forms of self-control and self-sacrifice will be multiplied and brightened a thousand-fold. If we give ourselves to Him, He gives us back to ourselves, calmed, hallowed, ennobled. The altar sanctifies the gift, which returns to the giver with new fragrance and worth.

Professor William James, in his well known book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* gives a good example of the result of such self-surrender in the case of Adolphe Monod. 'My sadness,' Monod says, 'was without limit, and having got entire possession of me, it filled my life from the most indifferent external acts to the most secret thoughts, and corrupted at their source my feelings, my judgment, and my happiness. It was then that I saw that to expect to put a stop to this disorder by my reason and my will, which were themselves diseased, would be to act like a blind man who should pretend to correct one of his eyes by the aid of the other equally blind one. I had then no resource save in *some influence from without.* I remembered the promise of the Holy Ghost; and what the positive declarations of the Gospel had never succeeded in bringing home to me, I learned at last from necessity, and believed, for the first time in my life, in this promise, in the only sense in which it answered the needs of my soul, in that, namely, of a real external supernatural action, capable of giving me thoughts, and taking them away from me, and exerted on me by a God as truly master of my heart as He is of the rest of nature. Renouncing then all merit, all strength, abandoning all my personal resources and acknowledging no other title to His mercy than my own utter misery, I went home and threw myself on my knees, and prayed as I never yet prayed in my life. From this day onwards a new interior life began for me: not that my melancholy had disappeared, but it had lost its sting. Hope had entered into my heart, and once entered on the path the God of Jesus Christ, to whom I then had learned to give myself up, little by little, did the rest.'

PATIENCE.

Heb. x. 36.—'Ye have need of patience.'

Much of the popular objection to Christianity is due to pure misunderstanding. And the misunderstanding is at its worst, not with the great theological doctrines, but with the daily duties of life. Sin, redemption, sanctification, may be fairly well understood, while there is a complete and disastrous failure to understand the meaning of faith, hope, love, meekness, patience, peace. Meredith Townsend, in his book *Europe and Asia*, maintains that the Christian ideal is too mild and tame to appeal to the Oriental, who desires something more of the type of a conquering hero. If that is so, Christianity appeals to nobody, for the Western mind is certainly not behind the Eastern in its admiration for the conquering hero. But what a misconception this is of the Christian ideal. 'Tame and mild!'—and at the centre of it, the object of its worship, He who endured the Cross, despising the shame! We must tell the world what those Christian words mean. And we may very well begin with Patience.

If it is not the greatest of them it is great enough to repay us. Ruskin says: 'Patience lies at the root of all pleasures, as well as of all powers.'[1] And of Christian patience in particular, Catherine of Siena declares that 'just as impatience shows more clearly than any other sin that the soul is deprived of God—because it is at once evident that since the pith is there, the tree of Pride must be there—so patience shows better and more perfectly than any other virtue, that God is in the soul by grace.'[2] John Ker, the Protestant, is not less emphatic: 'Patience—the last attainment in the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.'[3] And much to the present point is old Thomas Dekker:

Patience! why, 'tis the soul of peace:
Of all the virtues, 'tis nearest kin to heaven:
It makes men look like gods. The best of men
That e'er wore earth about Him was a sufferer;
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit;
The first true gentleman that ever breathed.

[1] *The Ethics of the Dust.*
[2] V. D. Scudder, *Letters of Saint Catherine of Siena*, 38.
[3] *Letters of the Rev. John Ker, D.D.*, 293.

I.

Patience in the New Testament.

What is the meaning of the word in the New Testament? We say 'in the New Testament,' for it does not occur in the Old Testament. The idea is not wholly absent there; something very like it is expressed by the phrase 'waiting on God.' But in the New Testament it occurs three-and-thirty times, and always in a way which shows that the quality denoted by it is of extreme importance. 'Bringing forth fruit with patience' is by our Lord declared to be characteristic of those who receive the Word of God in an honest and good heart. 'In your patience ye shall secure your souls,' He predicts regarding those who undergo the tribulation of the last days with due submission to God's will. 'Eternal life,' according to St. Paul, is the portion of those who 'seek glory and honour and incorruptibility according to patience in well-doing.' The result of tribulation used aright is patience, and patience in its turn produces experience, and experience hope; whilst, on the other hand, hope, if it is real, anticipating that which as yet we see not, but which we are convinced exists, in its turn produces patience. 'The signs of an apostle,' writes St. Paul to the Corinthians, 'were wrought' in his own case before them 'in all patience.' And in his Epistle to the Colossians the same quality is again insisted on. The power with which they were strengthened by the might of Christ's glory was to issue in 'all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.' And to the Thessalonians he had long before recommended patience of hope, patience and faith, the patience of Christ. In the three Pastoral Epistles patience appears thrice, associated with faith, charity, and meekness. In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is recommended as in this text, and as a necessary qualification for running the Christian race. In the Epistle of St. James a perfect work is ascribed to patience, if duly cultivated: and in the Book of Revelation occurs the most remarkable utterance of all. For there patience is associated with the very kingdom of the 'Lord of glory':—'I John, who am your brother and fellow-partaker in

affliction, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.'

Now the meaning of patience in these and other passages is not at once apparent to the English reader. The popular use of the English word is liable to mislead him. For it has lost its original vigour, and has come to mean little more than resignation. It is the doctrine of the downcast eyes and the clasped hands, a kind of pious acquiescence. But in the New Testament patience has a much nobler meaning. It is true that in keeping with other characteristic words of the New Testament, as 'faith' and 'hope,' the special colour of the word may vary somewhat when used by different writers; or again, the same author may employ it in slightly different ways according to the view-point he is taking, yet the variations are slight and the word generally tends to express the idea of *unflinchingness*. The Christian who possesses patience does not swerve under testing, but

Breasts the blows of circumstance.

This is not to deny that there is a tinge of passivity in it, but, existing therein, it is subdued and merged in the stronger element of stability. Hence the proper meaning is that of a brave, strong, resistful, yet not aggressive, endurance. The man who, when trials are thick upon him, refuses to allow them to crush his spirit is the better for his conflict. 'It is for education that ye endure' (Heb. xii. 7). Moreover, the association of hope with patience helps to confirm this rendering. 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope' (Rom. xv. 4). Paul remembers the Thessalonians because of their 'patience of hope' (1 Th. i. 3). Those who 'run with patience' are inspired with the hope of victory; their endurance fosters expectation (Heb. xii. 1).

Is there any other word that would now express the meaning of the writers of the New Testament better than patience does? Is there a better translation of *hypomoné*? 'Endurance' has been suggested. But endurance has too much passivity attached to it—a 'dour' passivity perhaps, but still passivity—while the Greek word is distinctly active. 'Strengthened with all might unto all patience,' 'Patient continuance in well-doing,' 'The testing of your faith worketh patience,' 'Running the race with patience.' This is not passive language. Patience is the whole man thinking, suffering, working, but, like Nature, working quietly, smoothly. Dr. Denney, writing during the War, says, 'It is not the quality of those who are wearily waiting at home for the war to end, because there is nothing else they can do; it is the quality the French have shown for the last five months at Verdun.'[1]

The element that is lacking in 'endurance' to express the New Testament idea of patience is faith. If we could say 'endurance in faith' or 'perseverance in faith' we should be pretty near the meaning. Is not that why Canon Barnett says: 'It is only the passion of patience which effectually reforms abuses'?[2] Dr. Huntley Skrine would make the words 'faith' and 'patience' almost interchangeable: 'Is not Patience in work just another word for Faith? We can be patient because we know Whom we have believed, and that we are patient is the proof that we have believed. Patience is faith not in the activity of a moment, but the activity which goes on; it is faith, might one not say, in its dimension not of intensity, but of time.'[3] In any case Stopford Brooke is right when he says, 'The root of patience is faith in eternal, absolute right; and perseverance in that belief is the patience which Job possessed, and which the New Testament writers praised. It endures and deepens when mere resignation breaks down under continued trouble. It borrows its power from the eternity of right itself, it shares in the quality of that in which it believes; and if the troubles were to last a thousand years, it would live on in unyielding perseverance.'[4]

I wonder now
If all the poets' music ever heard
Can greater be than some last dying words
Of homely slang upon a bloody hill
Somewhere in France. The words are: 'Stick it, boys!'[5]

For there was faith as well as active endurance in the words.

[1] J. Denney, *War and the Fear of God*, 113.
[2] *Canon Barnett, His Life, Work, and Friends*, ii. 30.
[3] *Sermons to Pastors and Masters*, 155.
[4] *The Onward Cry*, 206.
[5] L. A. H. Shorter, *The Forest Child*, 34.

II.

The Lesson of Patience.

Not the least of the lessons that we have to learn from life, a lesson which, if our religion be at all real, it must help to teach us, is the lesson of patience. The duty takes so many forms, its claims upon us are so various and often so unexpected, the temptations to ignore it are so common and sometimes so specious, that over and over again when we think we have learnt what there is to learn, and conquered the difficulty, it comes upon us again from a new quarter, and once more we have to curb our impatience and learn again to wait and watch and be content. From our earliest years, when we first begin to outgrow the mere silliness and weakness of a child's ignorant impatience, up to the very close of active life, when we still find ourselves expecting to reap results before their appointed time, there is no age at which we may not be gaining ground in this point, none at which we may not profit from more thought and care turned in this direction.

There are certain natures more liable than others to impatience, and sometimes the finest natures are so tempted. There is a note of impulse and of eagerness in certain natures which are full of charm; a nimbleness of apprehension; a sudden flashing as of a swallow's wing; and often it is natures such as these, which do so much to beautify society, that are most sorely tempted to impatience. It is the fairest of our Highland lochs which are most liable to sudden storm. In a tamer country they would escape the squall; we could reckon on them more in duller levels. But the very grandeur of the hills around them tosses them swiftly into wild commotion, and so is it with certain men and women. We think of Moses, meekest of God's servants, shattering the tables of the Law. We think of Peter, in impulsive loyalty, cutting off the ear of the priest's servant. And we seem to see the highland loch again, with its silent hills for ever reaching heavenward and its corries which are the caverns of the wind.

'Would that I could loiter!' says Mark Rutherford. 'Everything I do I hurry, and in the midst of pleasure press forward to the end. I swallow and never taste. This vice infects very high up and prevents the enjoyment of anything beautiful, for I have not the patience to stay long enough with it.'[1]

Two ways of gaining our end have to be resolutely rejected—violence and haste.

1. *Violence.*—'When kings go out to battle' they invade a country with the design of suddenly grasping power, seizing treasure, and covering themselves with glory, apart from all moral considerations: believing that the world is for the strong, they conclude that if they are only strong enough, prompt enough, subtle enough, they may appropriate whatever they covet. When the husbandman sets forth to realize his ambition he is guided by a wiser programme: by industry, discipline, and patience he strives to secure the wealth of nations.

As to the aspect of things when kings return from battle, the ghastly fields of Belgium and Northern France testify; and those desolate districts represent the working and issues of the policy of violence wherever it is tried. On the other hand, the husbandman, allured by the shower and rainbow, goes forth with plough and seed-basket, spade and scythe, to realize the potential opulence,

> To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
> And read his history in a nation's eyes:

the symbol of the working and outcome of patient virtue in all spheres. As Henry Naegely writes, 'If we cast a glance over the pages of history, we may note that the monarch, the statesman, the financier, and the philosopher continually contrive to bring the world to the verge of ruin, and that it is only saved from utter destruction by the peasant's blood, by his hard-won earnings, and his patient toil. Is not that the story of the nations in a few words?'

The curse of South Africa, says Harold Spender in his *Life of General Botha,* has been the impatience of its rulers. A certain readiness to appeal to force and to rely upon force had become the ingrained political habit of the South African, whether Dutch or English. Botha set himself to change that policy and succeeded.

> With fiery flash
> The lightning flies—

[1] *Last pages from a Journal,* 287.

Flaring its name
Across the skies:
Sporting in weird, wild, frantic form
With wind-tossed clouds and storm.

With crash on crash
The thunder
Rolls round, apace:
Booms out its mighty voice through space—
Routing the rain.

But this wee flower—
Born yesterday—
No force of power
Could it display
As lightning-flash,
Or thunder-crash,
Yet, steeped in silence, it doth give
Strength to that hope by which I live,
And charm to all who seek.[1]

2. *Haste.*—There are many plants whose blossoms you can gather and make bouquets of, for their only value consists in their beauty, or grace, or fragrance. Their blossoms are the best things about them. The fruit or seed they produce is too small, or hard, or tasteless to be worth anything. It is, therefore, of no account, and you are free to pluck and make a present use of the blossoms to delight you in your room with their beautiful colour, or elegant shape, or pleasant perfume. But, on the other hand, there are some plants whose blossoms it would be a great waste to pluck. Beautiful and graceful as they are, they are only the preparation for something that is better, for sweet and satisfying fruit. It would be exceedingly wasteful to pull the blossoms of a cherry or an apple tree, although the pure white clusters of the one, and the rosy shells of the other, would make lovely nosegays to wear on your dress or to ornament your rooms. For these blossoms have a still higher value than they get from their mere beauty and grace. They produce crimson cherries and rosy-cheeked apples, which satisfy several senses—not only the senses of sight and smell, which the blossoms minister to, but also the sense of taste, which the blossoms cannot gratify. It is far more sensible, therefore, to let them remain on the tree until they grow into fruit.

[1] E. Sandford, *Mad Moments*, 33.

Not a few of us have what has been called 'the lust of finishing.' We want to hurry on things; we want to obtain results. But if a man really loves what he is doing, he is in no hurry to get rid of it; he goes back to it again and again, views it in a variety of lights, under a variety of relations, in a word, he loves it, and lets it slowly ripen under his hand. 'Nothing would make him hurry a work' is the declaration of the biographer of Burne-Jones. And of Canon Barnett his widow says: 'Over all his work there ever brooded a patience that was almost a passion. "He that believeth shall not make haste" was the text that he most often repeated to himself and to others. To our workers he wrote: "A Gospel which makes present and future depend on goodness must by its very nature advance slowly. It is only by sad experience that men can find that rest and joy have no other foundations than right and love; it is only gradually that they are able to fight down the temptations which beset them, and hunt every trace of selfishness from their lives; it is only by degrees that they can gain the sense that One is near them, waiting to help them, who is their Father."'[1]

III.

Patience at Work.

Now let us see patience at work.

1. We start often with the resolve to learn this or that, and perhaps we may know it will take so long to learn; and yet how often do we really at heart expect the results to come before they can, and are disheartened quite unreasonably when they do not come, and sometimes even relax effort and give way to disappointment and throw it all up in despair, because we cannot command the patience which the task requires. It is so hard to believe, what is yet certain truth, that no effort at learning a thing is ever without its result; that every strain of the mind leaves its fibre imperceptibly different from what it was, and one step nearer to the end; that impatience is, in fact, a doubting of those very laws of growth on which alone we relied when we made the attempt to learn.

In Tinnevelly, in Southern India, the soil is so

[1] *Canon Barnett*, ii. 78.

barren and sandy that it seems little short of marvellous that the vegetation can make any headway at all. And yet from this same sandy soil spring vast palm trees, affording both shadow and support to the natives. Dr. Caldwell describes how the nut and seed of the palmyra—a kind of palm tree—remains for three or four years in the sand into which it has been cast, before any sign of life appears above the surface of the soil; but the seed has not, as one might suppose, perished in the interval; on the contrary, it is busily occupied in putting out roots in a downward direction in search of moisture. Very often, he remarks, it takes years from the date of its original planting before the tree makes any return to its owner. And what kind of return does it make? Let Dr. Caldwell reply. 'After about twenty years of neglect this wonderful tree begins to requite its owner for benefits which it never received. It is remarkable that the palmyra yields its sweet juice (the chief food of the natives) not during or at the close of the rainy season, when it might be expected to be full of sap, but during the hottest period of the year, when the heat is so great and so continuous that every blade of grass disappears from the parched soil.'

2. As we grow older, and know more of men's minds and thoughts, and gather a larger experience of life's energies and life's difficulties, and learn gradually to take a deeper and a wider interest in the great causes and questions which the life of the nation and the race involves, we find that there is a case where it is still more necessary to learn patience, and where it is still harder to learn it. And that is in those greater subjects in which the effort of one man is visibly so small that he can never hope to effect anything perceptible. It is difficult enough to be patient where we are acting on ourselves alone, or on the small social circles of our immediate companions. But still our efforts must count for so much here that we have every motive to persevere and overcome the difficulty, and hope on for the result which will doubtless come in its own time. But when it is really public matters in which we are interested; when we have set our best energies and enthusiasm to work to help on some larger movement—such as no true citizen of a country like this can help doing, however humble his abilities, when there are so many evils crying to be cured, so much work waiting to be done:—then, when we have worked and hoped and waited, and the end seems farther off than ever, and the tide perhaps seems for a time to set against improvement, and friends grow half-hearted or faithless, and unforeseen obstacles arise, and mistakes are made which bring much mischief and much shame; then it is indeed hard to go patiently and cheerfully on, still waiting for the good which principle and conscience prophesy, but which experience seems to make doubtful; it is indeed hard not to throw up the battle, and say we will busy ourselves about our own matters, and spend our labour where it shall not be fruitless. But yet the truth remains that it *is* our own matter now as much as ever, if once our duty has called us to lend a helping hand; the truth remains that no labour can ever be fruitless, if it be honest and earnest, though the fruit may come far other and far later than we hoped.

As a statesman, Viscount Morley quotes with approval the saying: 'The Man who is Master of Patience is Master of Everything.' [1]

3. It is in the spiritual world that the lesson of patience is most needed of all, and, when learnt, is highest and most Divine virtue. We need it first for guidance, to know what spiritual path to follow, and afterward for help to tread that path, and to bear the hardships and perils of the way. For guidance first. For in learning what the will of God is, there is nothing so hard as to be duly patient. It is impatience that in all ages of the world has made men look for infallible teachers. The Jews of Christ's day cried out for 'a sign, a sign.' In the middle ages men held, as some still hold, that the Church gathered in full council was infallible, and on their decisions faith might rest unquestioning. And the same impatience we observe in the use that some have made even of the teachings of the Bible and the words of Christ. God gave us these things to help us, to rouse our effort, to make our minds active, to fire our hearts, to make us weigh and ponder, to deepen our belief, and enlighten our choice: and men have tried to use them, not as aids but as talismans, to stifle doubt and crush enquiry, to make our faith mechanical and not intelligent, in a word, to take all choice away. Not such is God's will. His will is that the faith which guides our lives should

[1] *Recollections*, i. 264.

be, not a formula rehearsed, but a conviction slowly grown and growing daily; that doubt should not be stifled but patiently resolved, as resolved it will be, by thinking, doing our duty, striving and waiting; that light should come, as alone it can come, not as the natural heritage of those who have not sought it, but as the reward and crown of patience and endeavour.[1]

I waited for the Lord a little space.
So little! in whose sight as yesterday
Passes a thousand years:—I cried for grace,
Impatient of delay.

He waited for me—ah so long! For He
Sees in one single day a loss or gain
That bears a fruit through all eternity:—
My soul, did He complain?[2]

4. Patience is needed in peculiar measure for all development of human character. 'In your patience ye shall win your souls'—your *selves*. Every man, that is, has a true self, hidden amid the ruins of his nature. And as a mother from a burning homestead wins her child, so man must win his life. And the only way to do it is the long way, the long and tedious and patient way—in your patience ye shall win your souls. Just as there are no short cuts to heaven, so are there no short cuts to character. If it takes long to grow a mustard seed, it will take longer still to grow a man. And therefore we have need of patience when we are tempted to what is swift and flashy; so lengthy are the ways of God. 'All these kingdoms will I give thee *now*, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' It was the great temptation of the Christ as He looked out upon His opening ministry. And then He chose the long and lowly way, by the garden of Gethsemane and Calvary, and so came to His kingdom and His crown.

Christian patience is not so much an attainment reached by the striving of the human will as the work of the Spirit of God in the heart. Patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit. It is cultivated by a trustful and constant waiting upon God. That is the true significance of the Psalmist's words, 'Wait upon the Lord.' The man who waits upon God is the only man who can wait for God. Patience and prayer go hand in hand. As we live in communion with the 'God of patience' we receive of His Spirit, which enables us to walk humbly and trustfully before Him and in patience to possess our souls.

He is insensibly subdued
To settled quiet: he is one by whom
All effort seems forgotten; one to whom
Long patience hath such mild composure given,
That patience now doth seem a thing of which
He hath no need. He is by nature led
To peace so perfect that the young behold
With envy, what the Old Man hardly feels.[1]

[1] A. Sidgwick, *School Homilies*, 165.
[2] R. H. Benson, *Poems*, 31.

[1] Wordsworth.

The Future and the Unseen.

Heb. xi. 1.—'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'

THE eleventh chapter of Hebrews opens with such a profound and far-reaching saying that we should commit it to memory, and not only commit it to memory, but endeavour to make it the habit of our minds, so that we shall indeed have it by heart, ready to rush to our rescue when a disheartening view of things is beginning to hang about us. 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' Let us give a little more edge to the translation: 'Faith is the giving substance to things hoped for, a conviction concerning things not seen.' 'Faith is the giving substance to things hoped for.' That translation is absolutely literal and sound.

Faith is *action*. All the Christian graces are activities. They meet God half-way, so to speak. Two things stand over against one another—the grace of God and the faith of man. 'Grace' is a term for 'all the ways in which God comes in to the help of our lives.' And over against it stands 'faith,' which covers all the ways in which we appropriate the help of God. A small boat is in the bay and wants to cross to the other side. The power which is to help it across is all there in the wind; but when is that power effectual? Only when those on board give it the means of communicating itself to the boat, by hoisting a sail. True, the sails are powerless without the wind, but so is the wind useless till a sail is held up for it to fill and drive. Faith is the stretching out of

the hand, the hoisting of the sail. There is no Hindu passivity in real apostolic Christianity. Faith is life, protest, movement. It is the giving substance to things hoped for. And how do you give substance to anything you hope for? You believe in it as though you saw it.

I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea;
Yet know I how the heather looks,
And what a wave must be.

I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in heaven;
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given.[1]

You live for the sake of it, by the light of it, under the call of it. You make it as real as your own life. All your truly personal actions, the things you do most truly from your soul, become embodiments of it. You make it part of yourself. You stake yourself upon it. 'Faith is the giving substance to things hoped for, it is a conviction concerning things unseen'—that is the thing to keep saying to oneself.

The theme of this stirring chapter, then, is *Faith*. The closing verses of the 10th chapter contain a warning and an encouragement. 'Now, the just shall live by faith; but if he draw back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. But we are not of *backsliding* unto perdition, but of *faith* to the saving of the soul'—that is, the preservation of the true *life* of the man. In closest connection of thought the 11th chapter opens, 'Now faith is'—and then follow the definition and illustration of faith, and the celebration of its triumphs. Faith—that is, confidence regarding the future, and conviction of the reality of the unseen—has been the secret spring of every great and godly life, the condition of success in the large and true sense, the key to all noble deeds and heroic sufferings. In glowing words the writer tells of the victories which the great cloud of witnesses have gained by their faith, and points, last and chiefly, to Jesus 'the leader and perfecter of faith,' bidding the Hebrew Christians look to Him, and so run with patience the race set before them.

Faith, then, has relation to two classes of objects—(1) those that are future, and (2) those that are unseen.

[1] Emily Dickinson.

1. *Faith in relation to the future.*—It is assurance of the certainty of the glorious future. When a man is confident that, in spite of appearances, the good things promised or hoped for shall be attained, and when the present is dwarfed by the more glorious future, that man exercises faith. In faith, for example, the farmer sows. If the few bushels of grain were sent to the mill and ground, there would be immediate benefit in the shape of so much flour. But faith looks to the harvest time, when twenty- or thirty-fold shall be reaped, and so the little brown seedlings are committed to the ground.

There is no unbelief;
Whoever plants a seed beneath the sod
And waits to see it push away the clod,
He trusts in God.

Whoever says when clouds are in the sky,
Be patient, heart, light breaketh by and by,
Trusts the Most High.

Whoever sees, 'neath field of winter snow,
The silent harvest of the future grow,
God's power must know.[1]

(1) Little children, you know what faith is. Some of you have said, when you took the seeds out of a ripe apple, 'Mother, can I plant this seed in my garden? And will it grow to be an apple tree? And will it have apples on it?' And mother said, 'Yes, but you will have to wait a long time for it to grow.' And then you put it under the earth, and if you had little faith, you went after a week or two and dug it up to see if it were growing; and if you had more faith, you waited till the snow came and covered up the earth to keep it warm, and then the sun shone and the rains fell, and by and by you saw a little green thing, just like a weed, coming up, and you would have pulled it up, but mother told you that that was the little apple tree. You thought it didn't look a bit like an apple tree—no branches, no bark, and no apples on it—but still you waited, and year after year you watched it, and at last it grew into a real tree. Well, that planting and waiting, expecting a tree to grow out of that little seed, was just faith working—you had the 'assurance of things hoped for.'

(2) Boys, you know what faith is when you

[1] Edward Bulwer Lytton.

give up some portion of your pleasure and play, that by harder work you may win the prize at the end of the term. The sun is bright, and the playground charming, and the merry shouts of the cricketers make you almost shut the book and run, for you are a true boy and love cricket; but you resolutely deny yourself the present enjoyment, that you may make sure of the future good, which you count better worth having.

(3) Men, some of you know what faith is. When you have come to see that certain political principles, let us suppose, are true, and, therefore, best for the country, and when you have resolved that, come what may, you will maintain and defend those principles, whether the maintenance of them leads to power or not, you exercise faith. Appearances may be against you; short-cuts to success, and very tempting ones, may be open to you; the temptation to sacrifice conviction to policy may be very great; but if you set your face like a flint, resolved to follow whither Truth, as you see it, may lead, and to take the consequences, you are men of faith. You may possibly never enter the promised land; you may not live to see the triumph of your principles; if so, you will nevertheless die in faith, not having received the promise, but still cherishing the 'assurance' that the things 'hoped for' shall certainly be realized.

Is religious faith different from this faith in the child, the boy, the man? Not at all; it only occupies itself with different objects and takes a wider range. Instead of looking for an earthly prize, it looks for 'a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give . . . unto all them that love his appearing.' Instead of being exercised about an apple tree, it is exercised about 'the tree of life,' which is in the midst of the street of the New Jerusalem, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. Instead of being occupied with principles which tend to secure the political and social and commercial well-being of the nation, it is occupied with principles which will secure the holiness and blessedness of redeemed humanity here and hereafter. The believer looks not for the fulfilment of his own theories, but for the fulfilment of God's promises; he waits not for the triumph of the political party to which he belongs, but for the coming of Christ; his view is not bounded by the earthly horizon, even though within that horizon he may see political purity and social regeneration, prosperous commerce, righteous laws and international amity; but it takes in the eternal ages during which there shall be ceaseless progress in the knowledge of God and fellowship with Him, when the good of all lands and of all generations, their bodies fashioned like unto the body of the glory of Christ, and having the spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelling in them, shall be glorified with Christ for ever and ever.

2. *Faith in relation to the Unseen.*—It is 'the conviction of things not seen'—the conviction of the reality of things not seen. Faith is not necessarily occupied with the future. You never saw an iceberg. You never saw the rich foliage of the tropics. You believe in both. How do those of us who have never been out of Europe know that such places as Asia, Africa, and America exist? It is by faith in the testimony of those who have been there, or by inference from seeing things like black faces and white ivory, which are not produced in Europe, and which we therefore know must have come from other continents. Your eyes tell you that water in the glass is pure. A friend tells you it is full of living things, which he has seen through a microscope. You believe him. Your eyes tell you that the stars are little specks in a solid blue hemisphere; the telescope tells you that they are suns and planets, rolling along with inconceivable rapidity. You never saw the love in your wife's heart, you never will see it: it is one of the things that eye cannot see; and yet you are surer of it than you are of the fact that King George reigns. You have the 'conviction of things not seen.' You cannot see the patience and toil and self-denial of the doctors and nurses when some terrible epidemic is raging, and yet your heart throbs as you read of their Christ-like devotion even unto death, as it never throbs when you read that stocks have gone up, or that your candidate has been elected by trickery. You have faith, 'the conviction of the reality of the things not seen.'

Again we may ask, Is religious faith a different thing? No; but it takes higher flights. It concerns itself not simply about 'the sweet, sweet love of daughter, of son and of wife,' but about the love, sweeter far and more unfathomable, of God in Christ. It rejoices to believe in heroic doing,

and more heroic suffering on the part of men and women; but it rejoices still more to trace these to their fountain-head in the one great sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His life a ransom for all. It delights in the power of even poor human love to lift up the fallen, to soothe the sad, and to succour the dying; but it rises to that 'love Divine, all loves excelling' which stooped to the lowest degradation that it might raise the lost to the dignity and glory of sons of God. It is 'the conviction of the solid reality of things not seen.' It never saw God; but it knows Him and clings to Him. It knows Him in Christ; the power of the risen Saviour is a more real factor in its spiritual life than the power of an earthly monarch; the love of Christ is a more constraining motive than the love of dearest friend. The two senses of faith melt into one in Christ. The faith that looks into the future and the faith that realizes God in the present are the same thing. Christ is the revealer of the future glory. Christ is the manifestation of the unseen God. It makes God and heaven real.

¶ There is a section of Miss Nightingale's *Suggestions for Thought* called 'Cassandra.' It is the story of a girl's imprisoned life; it is in part autobiographical. . . . It ends with the death of the heroine. 'Let neither name nor date be placed on her grave, still less the expression of regret or of admiration; but simply the words, *I believe in God.*'[1]

The Functions of Faith.

Heb. xi. 1.—'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'

This passage presents us with three functions of faith as regards religious life. First, there is that form of faith that grasps or recognizes spiritual realities. Secondly, there is the type of faith that tests spiritual realities. And, thirdly, there is that highest of all forms of faith which substantiates spiritual realities—'faith is the giving substance to things hoped for.' Faith passive, faith active, faith creative, these are the three great operations of the soul in its religious experience.

1. First, then, a few words about that which brings to us a sense of the existence and reality of the great spiritual world. The last quarter of a century has witnessed the remarkable discovery of another hemisphere in our being—that undefined area of our inner life which lies beyond the little circle of conscious light and feeling, and which is called 'the sub-conscious.' This has been especially worked out by the Society for Psychical Research, which has shown that there is a great deal more in the experience of every man than he can see or know of himself by ordinary methods of self-examination. Consciousness is not a sun shining on a planet; it is rather a dim lamp held by uncertain hands and followed by a groping foot, in a winding cavern which here opens to the starlight, and yonder yawns into deep abysses where we catch faint glimpses of the sheer precipices and unplumbed depths of the soul. Perhaps it is well we can never know all that is in us. There is no doubt, at least, that solitude is repugnant to most men because of the sense they have of the immensity and the awfulness of the world within. It is here that we really meet with God, that we realize how—

Round our incompleteness flows God's great completeness,
Round our restlessness His rest.

Faith throws one exploring tentacle into this inner world, 'seeking God, if haply it might feel after him and find him,' and it throws another tentacle into the world without, seeking Him who 'is not far from each one of us.' In moments of deep emotion, the ordinary limits of consciousness are expanded; we see dimly the outlines of a grander order hidden from us in the common hours and days of our experience; and we feel that we are nothing, but God is all. In this mood of 'wise passivity' we find the germ of Mysticism. Here is the open door through which the prophet receives his revelation, and the poet his inspirations, and the pious and good realize their true dependence on the Divine life and love which enfolds and environs the soul. Meditation and prayer are the normal channels along which our sense of this deeper reality proceeds; but it often breaks into our ordinary consciousness, and we are suddenly transported into the Eternal Presence, and feel that 'every common bush is afire with God.' This passive function of our religious nature,

[1] Sir E. T. Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, 490.

however, has its dangers. The votaries of Mysticism are often little more than useless visionaries; their rhapsodies degenerate into vapourings; their piety lapses into useless ebullitions of feeling. The Nirvana of Buddhism is but the *reductio ad absurdum* of this mood of religious passivity, in which the very love of life is merged into a morbid longing for absorption into the infinite sea of being out of which we spring. The religion of feeling is no final goal for the healthy soul; the receptive element in religion must be balanced by a more vigorous exercise of the spiritual personality; its vague experience must be sharpened into definiteness and disposed into ordered channels of thought and action. In other words, the spiritual aptitudes of the soul include an instrument of criticism as well as an organ of realization.

2. We thus pass on to the verifying function of faith. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that faith is the 'proving of things not seen.' Faith includes an experimental faculty which tries and tests the reality of things. Professor Huxley writes: 'Theology claims that the just shall live by faith; science says that the just shall live by verification.' Clearly Huxley did not in the least understand the meaning of faith. He confounded it with credulity; but faith is the faculty by which we take a thing on trust in order to find out if it is true. It is the basis of all religious experiment, the background of all moral effort, the standing place of the soul in its leap towards God. First, we lean on the experience of God's presence in our innermost being; then we exercise our best faculties to define, delimit, and test the application of this experience in the fields of conduct and experiment. This is but another step in the exercise of the function of religious faith according to the historic revelation of the gospel of grace. Jesus Christ comes to us first of all with an appeal for our unquestioning trust. Without this trust He can do nothing for us. Give yourself wholly to Him. On the other hand—accept His commission, grow busy in His service, and the reward is there. 'If any man willeth to do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine.' This is no appeal to our credulity; it is the essential condition of all spiritual verification. The call of the Christian faith is this: 'Put my claims to the test: but remember, you cannot do so unless your test follows the law of all healthy experiment, which is that you must venture your all on the issue.'

This exercise of the principle of faith is not in the least incompatible with the fullest use of our intellectual faculties on the subject-matter of religion. The genuine believer cannot consistently hold back the tide of criticism from searching into the very foundations of his creed. Unwillingness to join in this process argues not faith, but a subtle doubt—doubt lest the realities of faith might dissolve and vanish into nothingness in the alembic of critical thought. No one attempts to hinder anyone from inquiring to his fullest bent into the constitution of matter. Why? Because we are assured that the closest scrutiny into the character and behaviour of the physical universe will end not in the dissipation of matter, but in its better comprehension and its fuller mastery. Why should it be otherwise with the deeper realities that appeal to our spiritual nature? True, there are special perils in this process: but our attention should be directed not against the process itself, but against those perils that are involved in it. We need to-day a thorough criticism of the methods of criticism, so that the mind may be properly safe-guarded from the many pitfalls that waylay the religious inquirer. But the first condition is a thorough and whole-hearted faith in the immovable realities on which faith rests and with which it has to do.

3. There is still another and crowning function to be fulfilled by religious faith—the creative. There is a faith which turns into concrete fact what at first it can only apprehend as an ideal. As it is finely put here: 'Faith is the giving substance to things hoped for.' Religion deals not only with the actualities of life, but specially and pre-eminently with its possibilities. The practical scientist can neither create nor destroy a particle of matter; but by our spiritual conduct we create or we lessen the sum-total of good influences in the cosmos. Religion aims at the realization of this possibility on the side of goodness; it is the power which 'makes for righteousness.'

Professor William James gives a vivid presentation of this aspect of will-power. He says: 'Suppose, for example, that I am climbing in the Alps, and have had the ill-luck to work myself

into a position from which the only escape is by a terrible leap. Without a similar experience I have no evidence of my ability to perform it successfully; but hope and confidence in myself make me sure I shall not miss my aim, and nerve my feet to execute what, without these subjective emotions, would perhaps be impossible. But suppose that, on the contrary, the emotions of fear and mistrust preponderate, or suppose that, having just read the *Ethics of Belief,* I feel it would be sinful to act upon an assumption unverified by previous experience—why, then I shall hesitate so long that at last, exhausted and trembling, and launching myself in a moment of despair, I miss my foothold and fall into the abyss. In this case (and it is one of an immense class) belief is one of the indispensable preliminary conditions of the realization of its object. There are, then, cases where faith creates its own verification. Believe, and you shall be right, for you shall save yourself; doubt, and you shall again be right, for you shall perish. The only difference is that to believe is greatly to your advantage.'

The Creative Function of Faith.

Heb. xi. 1.—'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'

HUMAN sight, like human reason, feeds upon experience, must have an object set before it, cannot work without materials. But faith is independent of experience, and in a way creates its object. It sees in darkness, believes without evidence, is certain of impossibilities, grapples with and forces the blank, dark, empty nothingness into substance, and consistency, and reality, and life; it is the reflection, almost too bright for frail human nature, of the Divine power that can create *ex nihilo*.

Bear in mind this creative character of faith, and then look about you and see where it exists.

1. First, there is *the natural world* around you, with its beauty, its variety, its harmony, its order, its simplicity of operation, its complexity of result, its myriad contributions to life and health and cheerfulness, its awful, dark, relentless ministries of death. Never before, whether by art or science, were the aspects and the processes of this natural world so curiously, sensitively, lovingly watched as now. And yet the issue of it all is *not* that 'the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.' Rather we 'have swept the heavens with our telescope and found no God.' And the blame of this lies not with our science, but with ourselves. Science, by the necessity of its nature, deals, and ought to deal, only with what is matter of observation—with the things that are seen; and the tendency of a scientific age therefore must inevitably be to overstimulate the sensual and weaken the spiritual imagination. It is we who should be on our guard against this tendency, and indolently are not. We allow its results to pass into our literature and language, till at last they become too strong for us, like the stereotyped phrases of old age. We accustom ourselves to separate the realms of faith and nature; to set primary far apart from secondary causes; to think the physical more uniform than the moral and spiritual order; and gradually, by admitting that there may be reality apart from spirit, to supply premises for the demonstration that spirit is unreal; while the same process of degradation is meanwhile paralysing our practice, and from the concession that some departments of life may be lived without need of faith we are led on by an inexorable logic to think faith itself a superfluity.

The remedy for all this is to remember that matter and spirit, as we call them, are but aspects of each other, the reverse and obverse of the same coin, the concavity and convexity of the same circle, the bright and the dark surface of the same God-concealing cloud. And to hold fast this faith in all its applications, to recognize Divine attributes in every phase of nature, to trace a network of peculiar providence in the blind evolution of forces, to realize that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost—all this requires an effort which, in the face of modern influences, can be called little less than creative.

2. And then there are *our social surroundings;* they too demand faith, and a faith which as we grow older is less easy to retain—faith in our fellow-men. There is so much that is unlovely and repulsive on the surface of society—so much selfishness, deceit, ingratitude, ignorance, prejudice, frivolity—and then below the surface so much evil where we hoped for good. And the evil seems

so persistent, and the good so soon wears out, that men tend to think less and less of each other as the years of life go on, and to speak of each other, and act toward each other, as little more than 'men machines'—good perhaps, as the world goes, or useful, or agreeable, but very unfitting objects for enthusiasm, or reverence, or love. It is a dreary picture, this; but your own experience must assure you that it is a true one of societies from which youth and its generosity have passed away. Set aside you own friends, and those whose friendship you still wish for: and what then are other men to you? Are they not already objects of slightly contemptuous indifference, if not actually of open contempt?

And yet, the while, each human soul has been chosen of God in the far eternity, and loved by Him with a peculiar love, and endowed by Him with special graces, and sent earthward with capacities and a destiny all its own; and throughout its days of pilgrimage is being waited on by angels, longing to bid it welcome, at the last, to its eternal home. Realize this by faith, and it will regenerate the world for you. You will cease to judge by the surface, and to impute motives, and to give party-names. You will distinguish the Divine essence from the human accretions on a character. Service will win affection from you, acquaintance become friendship; friendship, instead of fading, will gather intensity with time; the vague enthusiasm of humanity that comes and goes capriciously in youth will strengthen, ripen, fructify, into an abiding love for souls; and as you live and move amid spiritual presences, in worlds not realized before, you will know the blessedness of walking by faith and not by sight. It is an effort—a creative effort—but an effort worth the making.

'There is a hero in every man, a Christ in every man. See one there. Choose your meeting-ground with your fellow-man. Do not meet him on his plain side but on his least plain, most beautiful side. Worship the Christ in him.'[1] Mrs. Oliphant says of Edward Irving: 'He had so much celestial light in his eyes that he unconsciously assigned to every one whom he addressed a standing ground in some degree equal to his own. He addressed ordinary individuals as if they were heroes and princes; charged a candidate for the ministry to be at once an apostle, a gentleman, and a scholar; made poor astonished women in tiny London apartments feel themselves ladies in the light of his courtesy; and unconsciously elevated every man he talked with into the ideal man he ought to have been.'[1]

3. Turn, lastly, to *your personal lives,* and see how faith is faring there. Why, when your health and wealth and time and opportunities are not actively misused for evil, are they so often frittered away? Simply for want of faith. You start in life with high ideals, and an exuberance of energy, but you have not courage to bring the two into relation, you have not faith. Your ideals are like the visions that float before the artist; they are unreal to begin with; but you are endowed with a creative faculty, and can call them into existence by the bare fiat of your faith. You can *make* them what they are not—as the heroes and saints have done before you; but you *will* not, and so you allow the God-sent vision of your destiny to fade away unfulfilled, till in the end it will be nothing more to you than the melancholy memory of some long ago sunrise.

It is the same with life's other aspect—its sickness, and pain, and sorrow. It comes to you with a message full of spiritual meaning, but you are not on the outlook for spiritual meaning at the time; you suffer the sudden transition to put the eye of your faith out of focus, and fail to recognize spirit when it appears in this new disguise. You busy your thoughts at once with a host of secondary causes; the habit, or place, or indiscretion, which may have brought your illness on you—or the medicine, or diet, or change of air which you hope will soon take it away. You have not the faith to discard all these, and confront the reality which they conceal. You are like Asa, who, 'in his disease sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians.' And so the angel that was sent to give you patience, or insight, or recollection, or the one special grace which was your need, passes away with the heavenly message undelivered, and only leaves you one step nearer, but less ready, for your grave. And yet, if you had only known it, 'this sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.'

[1] Stephen Graham, *Priest of the Ideal*, 339.

[1] J. Lewis, *The Mystic Secret*, 79.

The Title-Deeds.

Heb. xi. 1.—'Faith is the substance of things hoped for.'

Bishop Lightfoot used to say: 'If we could only discover a large number of business documents and ordinary correspondence which were written at the time when the New Testament was being written, we might come to quite a new and rich interpretation of many of the New Testament words.' What Bishop Lightfoot hoped for has now arrived, and we are discovering letters written at the time when the New Testament was being written. We are discovering in almost bewildering quantity business documents having the same date, and we are finding the ordinary correspondents far back in the Apostolic days using words which St. Paul used in the letter to the Romans and the other Epistles.

Among words which have been disinterred there is the word which in the text is translated 'substance.' How do you think they used it? You would find an ordinary correspondent, or a man who was going to select or buy a house, or a seller of a house, using that word with the content of 'title-deed.' When they wanted to use our equivalent to the word 'title-deed,' they used the word which is hiding behind the word here translated 'substance.' Many have come to believe that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews must have had this content in mind when he was trying to express his wonderful conception of Christian faith, for see how life and colour come into the word when we take this recovered meaning and insert it in the text: 'Now faith is the title-deed to things hoped for.' The word leaps into actuality. It becomes fervid and full of colour. You at once have the figure of a man, with a title-deed in his hand, ready to take possession of splendid estates. And the fine, significant figure is this: there are vast moral and spiritual estates waiting for their heirs, and faith is the title-deed which gives possession to those estates and makes them ours to-day. Faith is the title-deed to things hoped for. Just as when you have got the title-deed of a house—the house is yours. Faith is the title-deed to all the glorious things hoped for in the Word of God.

1. The first essential in all faith is a certain acquaintance of the mind, a certain direction of thought. It must begin there. The first step in faith is the lifting up of the eyes upon Christ. You have the primary element of faith in the first two lines of that exquisite hymn of Ray Palmer's:

> My faith looks up to Thee,
> Thou Lamb of Calvary.

The first content of faith is an acquaintance. It is a mental uplift; it is a fixing of the mind; it is a direction of the thought upon Christ; it is a man putting his will behind his mind and fixing his mind upon Jesus. That is the first step in faith. Even in the Old Testament Scriptures, before the Lord Himself had appeared, you find this primary content of faith in the uplifting of the eye upon the Lord. There are whole Psalms where men are expressing their faith: 'I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up'; 'My eyes are ever towards the Lord'; 'They looked unto him and were lightened'; 'Looking unto Jesus.'

Have a face-to-face vision of the Christ. You may have heard of an incident that happened in Hyde Park. An infidel lecturer, addressing a crowd of men, was drawing a coarse and hideous caricature for them of the character of Jesus, and the men, as they listened to him, began to laugh and jeer at the Christ of whom he spoke. And it happened that Frank Smith, then of the Salvation Army, was passing by, and his heart was hot at the dishonour done to his Lord; and when the lecturer had done, he appealed to the sense of fair play always to be found in an Englishman's breast, and asked the men to listen while he told them the other side. And then he began to show them the real Jesus—the Jesus who worked for years in a carpenter's shop; the Jesus who was the friend of the poor and the outcast and the downtrodden; the Jesus who loved little children; the Jesus who went about doing good; the Jesus who preached the infinite value of the one lost soul; the Jesus who in love for men died upon the Cross; the Jesus who did no sin Himself, but for whom no one had sinned so deeply as to be beyond the reach of His hope and His love; and as the men listened a great awe stole over them, heads were bared, and when Mr. Smith had finished, these men, who but a few minutes before had mocked and jeered, gave three cheers for Jesus

Christ. It was a rough way of expressing admiration, perhaps. What did it all mean? Just this: they had come and seen, and prejudice had given place to admiration.[1]

2. The second element of faith, if the first is an uplift of the mind, is an action of the will. Faith is never merely a thought, never only a reverie, never merely a contemplation; faith is always an action. Faith is not merely a look, it is a walk; it is not merely a wish, it is a will. There is no faith without faithfulness, there is no faith without fidelity. Faith is not a passion which has no fidelity in it; therefore, the first element in all vital faith is the uplift of the mind, the fixing of the thought on Jesus the Lamb of God, the Incarnate One. The second element of faith is the process of the will, the obedience to the vision, that faithfulness which is the product of faith.

3. The third element is confidence. The proof of the most blessed friendship is when two friends can be silent. Have you got that? Dwell on that just a moment. In the early days of courtship love has much to say. You never saw such length of letters as those in which it expresses its fidelity. But when love ripens, passes out of the early springtime into summer and autumn, it is surprising how much it can say by silence. The husband and wife can sit by the fireside with a glorious intercourse absolutely independent of speech. And our friendship with the Lord is measured in the same way. In our early stages, perhaps, we thought we must be always talking; but as we ripen in friendship we can walk along all the way, just a look and a feel to see that He is there. A blessed friendship all the way, with eyes uplifted, my mind fixed on the Lord. When my mind is on the Lord, my will set to do His will, there is an openness between me and my Lord, like the openness—but ineffably greater—between two friends, two lovers, husband and wife. Between me and the Lord there is a ceaseless interpassage of glorious converse. I give Him my aspirations, He gives me His inspirations; I give Him looks, He gives me blessing; all the day long two open doors, my Lord's open, mine open, the two in blessed intercourse: 'If any man open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.'

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Hope of the Gospel*, 150.

Faith and Hope.

Heb. xi. 1.—'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for.'

The writer of this noble letter to the Hebrews nowhere rises higher than in the magnificent words of our text. He who will take these words and make them his companion, live with them and make them his own, thinking for two or three days of nothing else, will find himself on a mountain height of spiritual experience where all the petty quibbles that beset his thought are seen as a fog below him.

Let him remember that they were written by a man whose hopes had been shattered in order that they might be more nobly rebuilt. The earlier generation of the Apostles, St. Paul among the number, had hoped to see the kingdom of Christ upon earth which their Lord had seemed to promise them. 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar'—the metaphor is that of belated travellers in the night who suddenly see the light in a distant house and shout with gladness at the thought of the shelter awaiting them. 'These all died in faith,' but they died before they reached the shelter of the home for which they had hoped; they died in the night; and it is the province of our writer to reconstruct the hopes of his time in order to give his hearers faith to face the darkness of the persecution which the growing hostility of Rome was forcing upon them. He does so by giving a series of examples of men, all of whom, he expressly says, 'received not the promises'; men whose hopes were nobly disappointed on earth, but who gained those hopes in the Hereafter because, in that confident assurance founded upon hope which we call faith, they went straight forward and did always the noblest thing that they saw. Faith was to Abraham or to Moses, as it must be to us, in the words of a living writer, 'the resolute choice to stand or fall by the noblest hypothesis':

> By a power and a purpose which, if no one else upheld
> In life, we beheld, so—hoped.

The greatest painter of modern times has painted Hope. He has painted a woman blindfolded and

sitting upon the summit of the world, mistress of it all even in her blindness. Heavy clouds are above and below, and for light there is but the shining of a solitary star. In her hands is a broken lyre. One string of it only is left intact. Her head is bent with a proud, glad smile to catch the music of that solitary string. Her fingers are in act to twitch that string; and she will do it, though, should it break, all music will be banished from the world. She knows that God can make music with broken strings. Look on the picture, when you next have the chance, and see if that may not be the mother of noble daughters. Faith is one of the daughters of Hope.

1. A hope of the Unseen is all that God gives us until we trust Him. A hope, mind you, and not a proof. It is not God's will that these things should be matter of mathematical demonstration. Take a proposition in geometry, and mark how each step inevitably follows from the last. There are certain assumptions, called axioms, made at the beginning of the work. You cannot prove them, it is true, but you do not doubt them. They commend themselves to your common sense. These granted, your argument goes inexorably forward, and you reach conclusions of which you could not have dreamed when you began. There is no such process in the attempt which faith makes to measure the world. 'What,' you say, 'cannot man really prove that God exists, that Christ rose from the dead?' Certainly not. You can give a chain of reasoning which shall justify a hope that God is, a hope that man has an immortal soul, and step by step you can build up the historical evidence that the Nazareth carpenter showed Himself 'King of kings and Lord of lords' by conquering the foe that has conquered every king. But, always, when you have done this there will be an uneasy voice at the back of your mind which hints that perhaps the facts may be otherwise explained, perhaps the witnesses may have been mistaken. Like Thomas, you will say, 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.' Stifle this voice by reason you never shall. The question why God so arranged the world is a fair one to ask, and ought to be answered, so far as we can, if we are to convince ourselves that God has treated us fairly. If God's existence were as logically certain as a proposition in Euclid, there would be a moral compulsion to virtue that would deprive it of its value. It is certain that a man who cannot swim will be drowned if he gets into deep water. It is no merit in such a man that he keeps out of the water. You call him a fool if he does not. If it were equally certain that God existed, and hated and would punish sin, it is no merit in a man that he serves Him. You would call him a fool if he did not. No sane man would sin if it were absolutely certain that God existed.

> Henceforth neither good nor evil does man,
> doing what he must.

If the Almighty had but two alternatives before Him—that sin and disbelief should remain in the world, or that man should become a machine, doing only what he must— He could not but choose the former. Apart altogether from such considerations, let me tell you that the great saints of God would not have it otherwise. Ask any man who really knows God whether he would be glad to see for himself a logical proof that God exists. It is a strange thing, but he will tell you that he would not. A hope is all we ask for, all we really ought to want before we trust Him.

2. Faith takes this hope, makes the bold assumption that the hope is real, and goes forward in confident assurance. Thus Faith implies an act. Hope sees in its dreams the ladder reaching unto heaven. Faith resolutely plants its feet upon the rungs, and takes the risk of their vanishing. Hope sees the horses and chariots of fire round about its Dothan. Faith, strong in these insubstantial defenders, faces the horses and chariots of the King of Syria. Hope believes that this life is not all. Faith takes the risk that Hope is dreaming, and resolves to act upon the assumption that 'earth is but a pupil's place.' Faith is, and must be, in the first instance, a leap in the dark. It is 'the resolute choice to stand or fall by the noblest hypothesis.' 'To stand or fall'—Faith's act always contains this alternative, to 'stand or fall.' You must say to Christ, 'If I perish, I perish on Thy shoulder; if I sink, I sink in Thy vessel; if I die, I die at Thy door'; and you need not think that you are not ready to come to Christ because of your 'ifs.' Faith is—taking the risk, ventur-

ing all on your hopes, going forward in confident assurance that your hopes of the Unseen are true.

3. When the venture of faith is made, you shall receive a nobler certitude of the Unseen than logic can ever give. It is only the first step of Faith that is a leap in the dark:

> Nothing before, nothing behind;
> The steps of faith
> Fall on the seeming void—and find
> The rock beneath.

The 'whys' of logic become impertinences to him who knows. You will hold the Unseen, at times at least, more firmly than you ever held a scientific truth:

> The flesh I wear,
> The earth I tread, are not more clear to me
> Than my belief—explained to you or no.

Understanding by Faith.

Heb. xi. 3.—'By faith we understand.'

Faith is a condition born of and adapted to our ignorance, but it is the condition of all higher knowledge. It is the higher knowledge. 'By faith we understand,' literally, 'perceive with the mind.' Without faith you can perceive with the eyes or the ears or the finger tips, that is, you can perceive colour, form, sound, just what the brute perceives; but when it comes to perceiving with the mind, to apprehending, to understanding—without faith it is as impossible to understand as it is to please God. 'By faith we understand.' We are dependent on it at every step of the way. A moment's thought will establish how startlingly true this is.

1. It is by faith, first, that we understand, perceive with the mind, all those things that are beyond the verification of our own senses or experience. It is astonishing how many these are. Think of the things that you are sure of. Then think how many of these things you absolutely know of your own discovery, or perception, or verification. Reject all the others. How much have you left? To-day the broad expanse of knowledge stretches almost limitless on every side; eliminate all but what you know by direct knowledge, and it would shrink to the veriest pin point. The facts of history, of geography, of literature, of science, of the arts, we take on faith. We believe them on the authority of others. We have not time to verify them. We have not the means of verifying them. Without a long course of preparation, perhaps even with it, we have not the ability to verify them. In many instances, they can not now be verified at all. Yet we are not troubled, we are satisfied with the testimony, the reasoning convinces us. But we must remember that it is by faith, faith in human testimony, faith in human reasoning, faith in the processes of science, that we are led out into this large estate, into the world of thought. It is faith built on fact, on reason, on adequate testimony, but it is none the less faith, and it shows the stupendous folly of the man who, believing in men every hour of his life, refuses to trust in God.

¶ Huxley, in *Lay Sermons,* says that faith has been proved a 'cardinal sin' by science. Now, this is true enough of credulity, superstition, etc., and science has done no end of good in developing our ideas of method, evidence, etc. But this is all on the side of intellect. 'Faith' is not touched by such facts or considerations. And what a terrible hell science would have made of the world, if she had abolished the 'spirit of faith' even in human relations. The fact is, Huxley falls into the common error of identifying 'faith' with 'opinion.'[1]

2. But faith, again, is absolutely necessary to the scientist himself in penetrating those realms which lie beyond present sight or present knowledge. By faith we understand invisible things or things not seen as yet. A great many things of which the scientist is sure are things he has not seen. To believe in those things, so invisible, so contrary to appearance, he has to believe in the uniformity of nature, in the validity of human reasoning, in the veracity of things. He has had to believe that the line he observed going up to the very verge of what he could see keeps the same direction in the spaces beyond. How does he know that? There are mathematical figures which follow a certain course for a certain length of time and then suddenly, without apparent reason, break right off. Why may that not be true here? How do you know that a scientific law which is operative on this

[1] G. J. Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, 141.

planet, and at this moment, is operative everywhere and always? You do not know it. No intelligent scientist nowadays denies the possibility of miracle. The fact that things have happened in a certain order is proof only that they have happened, perhaps, always in that order, not that they always will. Why, then, does the scientist build upon the things he observes and discovers? Because he has faith that order reigns, that the same cause will always produce the same effect, that the same principles hold good beyond his vision that are good within it. He does not know that. He believes it. Believing it, he sees the structures that lie beyond his actual knowledge as clearly as if he saw them with his eyes.

3. It is by faith that we understand even those things that we say and think we know directly, and know absolutely, and know ourselves. How do you know that your senses tell you the truth? How do you know that your processes of reasoning follow the laws and facts of the universe? How do you know there are any laws and facts? 'Oh,' you answer, 'common sense! I may be mistaken, I may be under a delusion, but when all my friends, all the world, sees the same as I, what we see must be true.' Indeed? Must be? Why? What makes the 'must'? Did not the whole world say the sun moved around the earth? Have not whole communities thought they saw a thing they never saw? Who knows whether all mankind is not under a hypnotic spell? 'Oh,' you say, 'I will not believe such nonsense as that.' Ah, now you are getting down to bed rock. You will not believe that! That means that you will believe the other thing. You cannot prove it. Intuitions are incapable of proof. But what you will do is to believe your senses and believe the universal consciousness, and believe the processes of thought. That is faith pure and simple. You call it common sense. It is faith. And when you trace it to its source it is just this: You believe that your senses are trustworthy and reason is trustworthy, because you believe that the world must really exist, that it is a true world, that things do not lie and deceive and cheat; in other words, that truth and mind and reason and benevolence are at the base of things and out through the whole of things to their uttermost verge. That is to say, you believe in God, for that is the definition of God; and although perhaps you never thought of it before, every time you say: 'I see the sun,' every time you say: 'I feel the air,' every time you say: 'Two and two is four,' or 'That effect must have a cause,' you say it by faith that is built on belief in God. 'By faith we understand!' Without it you never knew a single fact, or moved a step in thought, or knew that you existed.

4. But we rise to higher things. By faith we understand, we get insight into the reality and the meaning of the world. These other things are details, parts, and one may understand them pretty well and miss the meaning of the whole. Faith, and nothing but faith, gives us the meaning of the whole. What a curious idea of the material universe the ancients had! The movements of the heavenly bodies were utterly incomprehensible to them. The sky was filled with stars whose strange, complex, wandering motions were a bewilderment. Their explanations of the things they saw were utterly erroneous. The reason was that really being away at one side of the solar system they thought they were looking out from its centre. Looking across, all the relations of things were out of line and distorted. When by faith they were enabled to leap to the centre—and that was a stupendous leap—and see things by imagination from the sun, how one by one the mysteries were solved, things began to be explained, and what had been confused, inextricable, inexplicable, became a magnificent system, orderly, consistent, a manifestation of the power and wisdom and glory of God. Some mysteries yet remain to be solved. There are gaps we have not filled, but the whole is clear, satisfactory, beautiful. All this is a parable. The world in its larger sense, physical, intellectual, spiritual, is a maze. There are dark problems, conflicting facts, tangles of contradiction, seas of uncertainty. The scientist, unwilling to make the supreme venture of faith, looks over the world and writes his crowning book and calls it the *Riddle of the Universe*. The critic, believing much but not believing enough, styles his questionings: *Guesses at the Riddle of Existence*. The epicurean sceptic of Persia sends forth in mellifluous measures his weariness and despair in view of the unsolved mysteries of life. From the standpoint of each one of these the mystery is unsolvable. It cannot be compassed, because we

take our stand on the earth as centre, or on ourselves as centre, or the earth-life as centre, and we look across at the intricately moving bodies, and life is a hopeless maze, and all without a plan. Now faith steps in and we make a bold leap over to God. We place Him in our thoughts as the fount and source and ruler of all things. We believe that the universe exhibits, at its centre, mind and heart and love. That is a leap. It takes faith to see it in the face of many things that confront us. But when we have made it, how everything simplifies! How countless things explain themselves! We see the world, an orderly, beautiful system revolving round its central, upholding sun. There are mysteries yet. There are things we cannot fathom yet. There are nebulæ we cannot understand, and in the galaxy are dark lanes, strange emptinesses, and yet the whole is clear, orderly and satisfactory, and we feel His greatness round about our incompleteness, round our restlessness His rest. 'By faith we understand that the worlds were framed'—in order and purpose—'by the word of God.'

5. And then by faith we come to understand the personal problems and mysteries of life. The riddle of the universe is interesting, but the riddle of my own joy and sorrow and destiny is more interesting to me. And the thought of it naturally follows because my riddle is a part of the riddle of the universe; it is the application of it in a specific case. If that first riddle is not solved mine can never be. If God is, if the worlds were framed for a purpose by a living intelligence and power and love, then we have a foundation on which to build, the clue to every mystery. If not, there is no satisfactory solution of this maze of hopes and fears, good and ill, joy and sorrow that I call my life. But by faith I grow to understand.

After this foundation—faith in God—it is by faith in two things that we see light in life's dark places.

(1) Life's details will be dark indeed if we do not believe in the supreme importance of *the spiritual*—that the human spirit is the paramount entity in human life. By faith we understand that these pains and pangs, these griefs, these losses, these shames, these bitter disappointments, these bereavements, have all a spiritual aim, are meant for spiritual discipline, for exercise, for growth, for purification. 'Why, oh why,' we say, 'should these things come to us?' Well, first, because God is, and God is love; and, second, because spirit is, and God intends in this thing a benefit to your spirit.

(2) *The heavenly* is the other thing. Even by believing in the spiritual, we cannot wholly understand or find a firm footing for comfort without reckoning in the eternal. Why was this Christian woman taken away when she had just begun to get where she could enjoy life as a reward for faithful labour? There is no satisfactory answer unless you hold in view the heavenly home. By faith we understand. In Wilkie Collins' *Moonstone* someone has possession of a lidless box, around the upper edge of which is an inscription which no one can read because the upper half of the inscription is on the lid, which has been lost. There are hints, suggestions, tantalizing conjectures, but no clear meaning. That is our life read without the light cast by the life beyond the grave. Place now above it the heavenly, and how the incomplete is rounded out, and that which seemed the incoherent mouthing of a dream becomes an oracle of God! The very incompleteness of the earthly becomes a stronger proof of the existence of the heavenly, and the heavenly gives the only explanation of the earthly that can satisfy the soul. And so by a leap of faith we have reached the answer to the riddle of our life.

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.[1]

[1] Browning, *Abt Vogler*, ix.

The Secret of Abel's Immortality.

Heb. xi. 4.—'By it he being dead yet speaketh.'

THE last time I heard those words spoken was in a northern churchyard. I was standing under the yew that shadows Wordsworth's grave. A soft wind, like a voice, went through the tree, and it seemed the birds that lived near the grave were all tame. A robin and a thrush stood within reach of my hand on the low stone wall; and I thought they must have known their friend slept there, and that none would dare to harm them where he lay. Wild flowers raised their heads and stretched their arms over the edge of the stone that held his name, and the lichen laid its fantastic fretwork on it; each gave their tiny tribute to one who loved them. I could hear the ripple of the clear water of the Rotha, as it ran round the base of the churchyard wall, always singing its hymn of quiet joy, and always, I thought, with remembrance in its music of its companion who had sung of it and loved it so dearly. There was nothing which did not seem to think of him, and the very stillness of the summer afternoon, that only the song of the birds and the sound of the water entered, sounds that made the stillness thoughtful, was like the spirit of his quiet verse.[1]

The greater part of mankind are soon forgotten. Their memory hardly lasts through a single generation; not even while those who knew them are still alive upon the earth. Others take their places and dwell in their houses; the old story of love and death is repeated at intervals in each family; the bridal and the funeral processions are seen coming out at the same door. We hardly remember the names of those who have preceded us in the third or fourth generation. And this oblivion does not arise from any callousness or unfeelingness of the human heart. It is the order of Nature and of Providence. One cometh and another goeth. No effort can detain the fleeting past. The grandchild knows its grandparents only for a few years, and to most men when they are approaching death their own children are nearer and dearer than their parents, because they are most present with them. Yet among the countless multitudes who have passed into the unseen world there are some who claim a more enduring remembrance at our hands. One or two have a place in our thoughts from which they can never be dislodged. They may have been bound to us by some singular tie of affection, such as that which unites a mother and a son; or there may have been someone who in a time of trial or disgrace has been to us more than a brother or a sister, who has soothed us in sorrow or nursed us in sickness, who when we had gone wrong has led us by the better way and brought us back into the path of peace. The words of such persons make an indelible impression on us. Or it may have been someone of whom we fervently say, 'He was the best man I ever knew.' Happy are they who have had such a friend, though only one, in the course of life. Their example is as a light ever shining upon us, and if we are about to fall into sin, the recollection of them is a restraining influence upon our minds. We desire, too, that they should be with us 'when our light is low,' or if they have gone before us, we would fain think that we are following them when we are passing through the valley of the shadow of death.

1. 'By it he being dead yet speaketh.' By what? By his spirit of sacrifice—that is the secret of Abel's immortality. How fresh to this day is the memory of the man! Hundreds of warriors have lived and died and been forgotten. Hundreds of dynasties have left not a name behind. But this man at the close of six millenniums is a living figure. He speaks to us across the far ages. We are able to commune with him and sympathize with him at the distance of two worlds. What is the cause of this? It is hard for us to enter into the spirit even of the past generation. It is hard for us to catch a kindred chord in the men of the last century. But here is a life that speaks to us through all the generations of time; here is a man who touches our hearts from the birth of all the centuries. Why is this? It is because Abel was great in that part of our being which never grows old—the heart. He was the earliest victim to the power of love, and the power of love is ever young. He did at the beginning of time what every pure soul has done in all time—he manifested his love by sacrifice. It is his sacrifice that keeps him alive in the world; it is, indeed, the only thing we know about him. He did no great deeds for his own day. He was perhaps little lauded by the men

[1] Stopford Brooke, *The Spirit of the Christian Life*, 119.

of his day, but he struck the chord that unites all days—the chord of the harp of love. We all know in all ages and climes what sacrifice means; other words may be obsolete, but never that. And when we look upon a sacrificial soul, be it ever so far remote in the midst of years, our spirit recognizes a brother, and our whole life goes out to meet him: 'by it he being dead yet speaketh.'

There is only one influence that will speak to all ages; it is sacrifice—the giving up of something in the cause of right. That is the only thing which appeals equally to every generation of men. All other experiences are changed by the years. Manners change; customs change; apparels change; tastes change; ideals of beauty change; the fashion of each successive age passes away. Cain was a great man in his time, Esau was a great man in his time, Saul was a great man in his time; but it cannot be said of any of these, 'By that greatness he, being dead, yet speaketh.' Nobody would now admire Cain—not even the bad man. Nobody would now admire Esau—not even the selfish man. Nobody would now admire Saul—not even the vain man. Cain and Esau and Saul do not 'speak' to us—do not appeal to us. We do not feel that they are moderns. There is a far-away sound about their voices as if they were talking through a mist; and so they are—the mist of vanished years. But there is one region of the past which is always modern and whose voices do speak to us. There are birds of Eden which sing in modern London, in modern Paris, in modern Rome, and there is no fainting in their song. There are flowers of old Israel which we meet in the gardens of Europe, and there is no fading in their colours. What are these birds of eternal song, what are these flowers of perpetual bloom? They are the sacrifices of the heart. Time writes no wrinkle on the deeds of sacrifice. The ark of the Israelites is worn and old; the shout of the Philistines is far off and feeble. But the love of Jonathan and David is as young as yesterday; the devotion of Ruth to Naomi is as modern as this morning; the affection of Joseph for his brethren is as fresh as a summer field. The sacrificial spirit belongs to all ages. It annuls the differences of time. On that mount Moses and Elias can speak to Peter and John, and forget the centuries between. These were all sacrificial lives, and therefore time is for them indifferent. The yearnings of the heart make us independent of the years; they speak not to men but to man.

2. Men may assume two attitudes towards Christ and His revelation. They may refuse to accept Him on His own terms. They may take of His truth only just what suits themselves, what commends itself to their prudence, or their pleasure, or their reason. It is obvious that is neither faith nor obedience, for the essence of faith is trust in another when you cannot see where that other is leading you, and the essence of obedience is surrender of the will to another, not because you recognize either the wisdom or the rationality of what is commanded, but because of the authority which the other has a right to in your life. Well, that is one attitude which men and women assume towards Christ. They accept Him just as far as He commends Himself to their judgment and their desire. But that is not saving faith, that is not the offering which God can accept, for it is not surrender to God at all. It is only surrender to our own wish and wisdom. That is the faith of Cain.

But there is another attitude, there is another sort of faith. This is the faith that gives itself over absolutely to Christ. It gives itself over as the patient gives himself over to the doctor. It comes to have no will or wish of its own. It says, 'Lord, I do not know whither Thou wilt lead, but I do not care, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest; I commit myself to Thee as a child to a mother. I cease to have a desire or a doing apart from what Thou dost counsel and command, I take Thee wholly at Thy word, let come what may.'

> . . . Though mind and brain
> Wither and are in vain
> And thought a pain;
>
> Through sorrow, like a thief,
> Follow to rob belief
> And faith be grief;
>
> Though my obedience show
> No fruit I here may know
> Save utter woe;
>
> Though health and strength decay
> Yea, though the truth shall slay,
> I will obey.

That is the faith of Abel. That is the faith of the father of the faithful, who went out not knowing whither he went. That is the faith that saves. For God thus gets leave to work. Faith opens every door, and lets Him in, and therefore that is the faith that overcomes the world.

Enoch's Faith.

Heb. xi. 5.—'By faith Enoch was translated.'

In a book on *The Souls of Black Folk* written by one of them (Dr. W. E. Burghardt du Bois, Professor of Economics and History in Atlanta University), there is a pathetic chapter, entitled 'Of the Passing of the First Born.' It is not the story of a certain night in Egypt. It is the story of a birth and a death in Professor Du Bois' own home in the West. He tells it well. But the most memorable thing in the story is the unintentional revelation it gives that the birth of his first-born made a man of Professor du Bois.

1. This chapter in Professor du Bois' book recalls a yet older story in which something similar is hinted at. In the fifth chapter of Genesis, that chapter to which the late Dr. Joseph Parker gave the name of 'Nobodyism,' after you pass Seth and Enos and Cainan and Mahalaleel and Jared, you come upon Enoch. And of Enoch it is said that he lived sixty and five years and begat Methuselah, and that after he begat Methuselah Enoch walked with God three hundred years. After he begat Methuselah. Methuselah was his first-born. Is there anything in it?

The commentators say there is. Dr. Alexander Whyte is one of the commentators, and he is very impressive on it. 'Enoch, from the day that his little child was born, felt God shed abroad in his heart. He entered every morning with his child in his arms, and with his God in his heart.' And then he makes his appeal without hesitating: 'Fathers and mothers, young fathers and young mothers, fathers and mothers whose first child has just been born, and no more . . . seize your opportunity, let not another day pass. Begin to-day. Begin to-night. It is late, if not yet too late, with the most of us; but it is not yet too late with you. It was his first son that made Enoch a saint. As soon as he saw his first child in his image, and in his arms, Enoch became from that day a new man. All men begin to walk for a short season with God when their first child is born; only Enoch, alone almost of all men, held on as he had begun.'

In that heart-searching little volume by R. W. Barbour, entitled *Thoughts,* we read: 'The possession of a child of one's own opens up the possibility of an entirely new world of experience, and therefore of an entirely fresh revelation of the First Author and Supreme Object of all experience. I think I have told you before what my first thought was when I caught sight of a little, living, moving, grumbling thing, mouthing its fingers and rubbing its fists in its eyes, on the floor before the fire. It was as if the Father in Heaven had fairly (if it is not irreverent to say so) shaken hands, offered me His hand, and said, "Thou art forgiven."'

2. But about this Enoch. Dr. Parker calls the chapter in which Enoch is mentioned a chapter of Nobodies. Well, even nobodies are necessary. The earth is necessary, as well as the salt that salts it. 'When your little child is ill,' says Dr. Parker himself, 'he needs kindness more than genius, and it will be of small service to him if his mother is good at epigrams, but bad at wringing out a wet cloth for his burning brow.' 'It is a long, dull, road,' says Dr. Parker, 'from Enos to Jared,' but the chapter is not ended, when 'round the corner' you come upon Enoch.

And Enoch is somebody. Enoch 'walked with God.' Enoch 'was not; for God took him.' 'By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death.' That he should not see death—all the somebodies among us would give all that makes them somebody to obtain that.

It is the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews who says Enoch was translated by faith. What an influence to attribute to faith. St. James asks (in our Version), 'Can faith save you?' This author affirms that it can translate you. And he is most practical and full of common sense. Our Lord says, 'If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you'; and we do not know what to make of it. But the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is one of us. He knows what faith can do for common men. And

he says, 'By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death.'

3. How did Enoch show his faith? In two ways. He believed that God is; that was one way. And he believed that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him.

(1) He *believed that God is.* But we all do that. 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.' We all believe that there is a God. Is that what Enoch did? No, not that. The devils believe that God is, and tremble. Enoch had faith that God is. We believe the fact, we believe the theological statement, that God is. But that will not translate us. Enoch 'faithed' that God is.

Why did our Christian fathers fail to make for us a verb out of the noun 'faith'? They made a verb out of 'hope'. They allowed us to say, 'My hope is in God,' and 'He hoped in God.' Why did they not encourage us to say, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in his own proper tongue could say, 'By faith Enoch was translated . . . for he that cometh to God must faith that he is'? We are driven to say, 'must believe that he is'; and there is no virtue in the word 'believe' that it should translate us.

Enoch faithed that God is. And what is faith? 'Now faith is the substance (RV "assurance") of things hoped for, the evidence (RV "proving") of things not seen.' So Enoch hoped for God. Do we do that? 'Our God is a consuming fire'; and 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God'; and when we think of it, we rather hope that God is not. Enoch hoped that God is. And he realized his hope. His faith gave his hope substance, assurance: gave him the grasp of his hope; made it real and actual and at hand. It is true that no man hath seen God at any time; but faith is the evidence of things unseen: it makes the unseen seen. By faith Enoch not only hoped that God is, but realized his hope, saw God, and walked with Him.

(2) That was the one way in which Enoch showed his faith—he faithed that God is. He also *faithed that God is a rewarder* of them that seek after Him. That was the other way. And what reward did his faith bring? It brought him translation. 'By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death.'

That he should not see death. What a reward! No weary waiting till the end come; no long-drawn agony; no valley of the shadow of death. 'Terrible,' says Carlyle, 'terrible to all men is death; from of old named King of Terrors.' Enoch had not to face the terror. What a reward!

But what faith can do for one man, faith can do for another. If we faith that God is, and walk with Him, that faith is able to save us, that faith is able to translate us. It translated Enoch. It might have translated Christ. For another reason Christ had to die. If He had not come to die for us, it would no doubt have been said of Him, as it was said of Enoch, 'He was not; for God took Him.'

Do you ask, What would then have become of the mortal and the corruptible? Well, what did become of it? We cannot tell. We only know that that is another matter, that it is a very insignificant and wholly negligible matter. We need not be troubled about that. St. Paul was not troubled about it. He knew that this corruptible has to put on incorruption and that this mortal has to put on immortality. How, he did not know. But he was not troubled. He simply said, 'The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.'

3. But we are losing the point of our story. We have run after the body, and have left behind the man. We have gone to the churchyard to visit our dead, and they are alive. We have looked forward doubtfully to a distant resurrection—'I know that he shall rise again, at the last day'—and we have forgotten that 'he that believeth in me, even though he have died yet shall he be alive; and whosoever is alive and believeth in me shall never die.'

What did the translation of Enoch mean to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews? Not deliverance from the death of the body. The body of Enoch was not in all his thoughts. The translation of Enoch was to him the continuance of Enoch's life. And in this he was in touch with his nation from the beginning of its history. The gift of God to Israel was not resurrection from the dead, but continuance of life. 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' Not for one moment did God cease to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore not for one moment were they dead. When Christ came,

He came to renew the offer of the gift. 'I came that they may have—not resurrection but—life, and that they may have it abundantly.'

And if the gift of God to Israel was not resurrection, still less was it the resurrection of the body. The body was not in it. It was 'life eternal,' the undying life of the man. Says Dr. George Matheson (and Dr. George Matheson in his blindness had a wonderful way of seeing into the heart of things): 'It was not the sight of a dead body that made the Jew a sceptic; it was the sight of a dead soul.' The soul that sinneth, it shall die. Enoch did not die because he did not sin. He gained the desire of the heart of every true Israelite—an unbroken fellowship with God. He was with God here. When God removed him, he was with God there. So far as our eyes could follow him he was not, for God took him; but He took him to be 'ever with the Lord.'

Pleasing God.

Heb. xi. 5.—'He pleased God.'

THE possibility of pleasing God, without which life would be an intolerable burden, lies beneath proverb, commandment, prayer, and religious confidence, as they are found in the Bible. 'When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him' (Prov. xvi. 7). 'Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord' (Col. iii. 21). Paul prayed for the Colossians (i. 10) that they might 'walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.' And here is the law of dependence between piety and success in prayer: 'Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight' (1 John iii. 22). What men have hidden as a truth in their proverbs, have urged as a plea for duty, have employed as a subject for prayer and foundation for confidence, has all the force of a presumptive fact. No sense of original or actual sin can or ought to displace this great factor from the conscience of man.

God can be pleased, then. He is not a cold abstraction, an immovable substance, a dull, unimpassioned, silent, joyless, mighty force. He is a person, capable of affections and emotions. He is a heart that feels. Delight is no stranger to Him. His love is no vague, blind impulse, flowing dumbly towards all things alike. It is a seeking, choosing love; and when it finds the object of its search, a thrill of gladness passes through it, larger, purer than we can understand, and yet like that which comes to us when we see the fairest and the best. He approves and blesses. His Spirit is filled with the music of pleasure.

To please men is a natural impulse. There is no one who does not desire in some degree to obtain the liking and favour of his fellow-creatures. But presently, as we come to know by experience how shallow and how fickle are the fashions of the world, how false and often how impure are the motives by which the liking of the crowd is influenced, how easily it is gained by accident and lost by chance, we begin to see that this kind of surface favour is deceitful, and to look for something better.

To please good men—that is a nobler ambition. To win the confidence and honour of those who are honest and earnest and upright; to speak some word, to do some deed, to exercise some virtue, of which those who think deep thoughts, and lead pure lives, and perform noble actions, shall say, 'That was right, that was true, that was kind, that was brave'—this is a motive which has always been potent in the most generous breasts, restraining them from evil, nerving them to heroic efforts, stimulating them to dare and to do.

But there is a motive deeper and even more intense than this: it is the desire to please that one among our fellow-creatures whom we have chosen, it may be, as the most loyal heart and true; to pluck some flower from the lofty crags of duty; to win some honourable trophy in the world's great battlefield—yes, even though that trophy be but the scar received in warring for the right. To do something, to endure something which shall really please the one who is to us the best and dearest on earth—how many a soul has been quickened and uplifted and strengthened to face danger, disgrace, and death by that profound desire!

But to please God, the perfect, radiant Being, the most wise, the most holy, the most beautiful, the most loving of all Spirits; to perform some task, achieve some victory, bring some offering that shall be acceptable to Him, and in which He shall delight; simply to live our life, whatever it may be, so that He, the good and glorious God, shall

approve and bless it, and say of it, 'Well done,' and shall welcome it into the sense of His own joy —that is a Divine ambition.

> What vaster dream could hit the mood
> Of love on earth?

It has sustained martyrs at the stake, comforted prisoners in the dungeon, cheered warriors in the heat of perilous conflict, inspired labourers in every noble cause, and made thousands of obscure and nameless heroes in every hidden place of earth. It is the pillar of light which shines before the journeying host. It is the secret watchword of the army, not given to the leaders alone, but flashing like fire through all the ranks. When that thought descends upon us, it kindles our hearts and makes them live. What though we miss the applause of men; what though friends misunderstand, and foes defame, and the great world pass us by? There is One sees in secret, and follows the soul in its toils and struggles—the great King, whose approval is honour, whose love is happiness. To please Him is success, and victory, and peace.

Knowledge—Service—Likeness.

Heb. xi. 5.—'He pleased God.'

THERE are three things necessary to the pleasing of God—knowledge of God, service of God, likeness to God. Man is made to know as much as possible, to do as well as possible, and to be as good as possible. In the sphere of knowledge, in the sphere of action, in the sphere of character, faith is the one element that gives life and power to please God.

1. Look first at the sphere of *knowledge,* the understanding of the world and of life. We stand in a strange and mysterious universe, with certain faculties to help us to a comprehension of it. First, we have the senses, and they tell us how things look, and taste, and sound, and feel. Then we have the reasoning powers, and they enable us to discover how things are related to each other, how causes are followed by effects, how great laws control their action and reaction. But is there not something beyond this, a depth below the deep and a height beyond the height? Every instinct of our nature assures us that there must be. The lesson of modern thought is the limitation of science and philosophy. But outside of this narrow circle lie the truths that we most desire and need to know. In that unexplained world dwells God. Why should we hesitate to confess that we must have another and a higher faculty of knowledge? The astronomer has keen eyes, but he knows their limitation, and he does no discredit to them when he uses the telescope to bring near the unseen stars. The entomologist has quick sight, but he does not disparage it when he turns to the microscope to search a drop of water for its strange, numberless forms of life. Reason is excellent and forceful, but beyond its boundaries there is a realm which can be discerned only by faith. Where science ends, where philosophy pauses, faith begins. 'By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.'

On the simplest soul that feels the wonder and the hidden glory of the universe, on the child to whom the stars are little windows into heaven, or the poet to whom

> the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears,

God looks down with pleasure and approval. For in such a soul He sees the beginning of faith, which is able to pass behind the appearance to the reality, and make its possessor wise unto everlasting life.

2. Faith is no less necessary in the sphere of *action.* There are some who would persuade us that believing is appropriate only to infancy and old age; that it is a kind of dreaming, an infirmity of the weak and visionary. But the truth is otherwise. Carlyle says: 'Belief is great, life-giving. The history of a nation becomes fruitful, soul-elevating, great, so soon as it believes. A man lives by believing something, not by debating and arguing about many things.' Faith is power. It makes men strong, ardent, persistent, heroic. Nothing truly great has ever been done in any department of the world's work without faith.

If the cause be Divine, if the idea come from above, if the action be impelled by faith in God and a resolve to do His will, then how dauntless and impregnable does it make the heart in which it dwells. St. Paul, standing alone against the mocking, sneering world to testify to the truth as

it is in Jesus, 'I believe and therefore speak'; Luther, riding into the city of Worms, though every housetop were thronged with devils, and appearing alone before the imperial council, 'Here stand I, I cannot do otherwise, God help me'; Morrison, the first missionary to China, standing alone on the deck of the ship that bears him to a strange and hostile world: 'Do you think,' says the captain, 'that you will make an impression upon 400,000,000 Chinese?' 'No, sir,' is the reply, 'but I believe that God will':—that is faith—everywhere and always the victory that overcometh the world.

3. Faith is necessary to please God, because it is the only means of attaining to spiritual *character*, which is spiritual power. If we are honest with ourselves, we shall confess that there is nothing great and noble in the world, nothing which calls forth the admiration and the love of men, which is not sealed with the sign of faith. To feel the reality of something above us, above our temporal experience, above the limit of our single lives; of something more enduring than the shows which we see, more glorious than the visions which we frame, is just so far to rise to the possibility of a more transcending triumph. It cannot indeed but be so. For faith not only apprehends the unseen, but enters into vital union with it, and so wields, according to its strength, the powers of the world to come.

¶ A very remarkable account of the state of the Scotch commons as a result of the Reformation 'is to be found in a letter of an English emissary sent by Lord Burleigh to see how things were going on. It was not merely a new creed that they had got: it was a new vital power. "You would be astonished to see how men are changed here," this writer said. . . . "The poor think and act for themselves. They are growing strong, confident, independent."' [1]

¶ Cyprian tells us that while he looked wistfully towards the Christian ideals, they seemed to him hopelessly remote from such as he—a mere impossible dream, but that when he actually gave himself to Christ difficulties vanished, and even here it all largely worked out till he could point to his own utter change of nature as a proof unanswerable both to himself and to us of what Christ can do.

[1] Froude, *Short Studies*, i. 175.

Belief and Life.

Heb. xi. 6.—'He that cometh to God must believe that he is.'

We are continually met by the common assertion, 'It doesn't matter what a man believes so long as his life is all right.' To those who hold this opinion the very attempt to teach Christian doctrine, except on the side of bare morality, appears a barren waste of time; and any effort to secure or maintain purity of doctrine by argument is regarded as even worse. It is worth while to investigate the causes of this common neglect of belief as a dominant factor in life.

1. The first cause, no doubt, is the obvious truth that the conduct of many professing Christians is apparently uninfluenced by the high beliefs they hold. When D'Arcy confessed that he had been a selfish being all his life, 'in practice though not in principle,' [1] he was merely owning to an anomaly of which far more flagrant instances, unhappily, may daily be observed. We may indeed go further and with Dr. Paget find in this miserable truth the root of the objection not merely to doctrine as such, but to all religion. 'While critics and apologists with their latest weapons (or with the latest improvements of their old ones) are charging and clashing amidst clouds of dust—with the world still thinking that here at last is the real crisis—the practical question between belief and disbelief is actually being settled for the vast majority of men by the silent and protracted conflict between the consistent and the inconsistent lives of those who alike profess themselves Christians.' [2]

2. A second cause of the contempt for the intellectual element in religion must undoubtedly be the apparent remoteness of a great part of Christian doctrine from the affairs of everyday life. It is a regrettable fact that the majority of the questions in dispute between different communions—in so far, at least, as they come to the knowledge of the public—have no apparent bearing whatever on matters of conduct. 'What does it matter,' says the ordinary man, 'whether this or that point of theological nicety be true or

[1] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, ch. 58.
[2] *Studies in the Christian Character*, p. xx.

false? Will it help me to keep a higher standard of life?'—and if, on casual inspection, he finds it will not, he dismisses it at once as merely another instance of tedious and unprofitable mental gymnastics on the part of the clerics. And as he finds one piece of doctrine or another to be remote from his daily interests, he tends more and more to condemn all doctrines as having the same futility at bottom, and to regard all religions and forms of thought as identical, 'because they are all going to the same place.'

3. It is to be noted in both of these popular objections to the intrusion of anything more than an intellectual minimum into religion, that the question at issue is not that of the *truth*, but that of the *value*, of the Christian doctrines. This distinction is a real and important one. Ultimately, no doubt, all truth is of infinite value; but for practical purposes there are certain truths, in science and philosophy as well as in religion, which to the ordinary man seem of theoretical importance only. They cannot be shown to bear upon his life. We may hazard the opinion that there is, in the common mind, no rooted or widespread belief that the doctrines of Christianity are untrue. What is alleged against them is that, even if true, they are valueless.

This gives us a hint of a third reason, deeper even than the two we have considered, for the popular disregard of the intellectual side of religion. It is that men can only with the greatest difficulty be brought to *test* the value of the Christian beliefs. For, as has often been pointed out,[1] to test the value of the Christian creed a man must adopt the form of life which the creed demands. Value can be proved or disproved only by experiment; and the Christian experiment involves, as a preliminary, entrance upon the full Christian life. Few of the critics of Christianity care to make the experiment on these conditions; the value of dogma is in effect condemned untested, because the test demands too much of the investigator. But without the test, dogma will always appear valueless.

¶ It cannot be denied that religion verily is, through and through, a matter of experience. The domain of religious faith is that of practice, while hypotheses, scientific or other, are, as a rule, considered to be essentially and primarily theoretic affairs and nothing more. It follows naturally that proof, disproof, and doubt must differ in the two cases. The test of a religious faith lies in the kind of behaviour that it inspires and controls, and in the contribution it makes to human well-being. The proof is pragmatic. It is like the test of the invention, and in nowise like the arguments for or against a theory. It consists in observing 'how it works.' And then, neither the non-religious man, nor the deaf man, know all about their subject so long as they are without personal experience, however correct their theories. Do they know the real thing at all, seeing that they have never known its splendour invade the soul?

The looker-on at religion, the secular-minded sceptic, must recognize his limits. And I may say quite plainly here that a great deal of the scepticism of the present day is for these reasons not worthy of respect. Men reject what they have never tried, and condemn what they have never seriously or systematically reflected upon. They have been engaged with other things than those which are spiritual, and which concern the making of their manhood. The affairs of religion are as foreign to them as the computations of higher mathematics, and their judgment of the former has as little value as their knowledge of the latter. They have not tried it in practice; they do not know its history; they are not within reach of advanced argument either for or against religion.[1]

This, then, is the real reason why dogma is adversely criticised—its critics are loth to accept the conditions upon which alone it can be fairly tested. But the two other reasons—which may be called, in comparison, the *alleged* reasons for its condemnation—are insidious, and require examination and refutation. In answer to both it may fairly be pointed out as a universal fact of life that beliefs, opinions, creeds, dogmas—however they may be called—*never fail* to influence conduct. Their influence upon it may be unnoticed—so much so as to give rise, with some justification, to the charge of inconsistency; it may be wholly inadequate in comparison with the ideal, but it is there. Instances of it occur so constantly in every-day life that it is idle to begin to quote them. Without going to the length of the Socratic asser-

[1] Cf., *e.g.*, H. S. Holland, *Logic and Life*, 20.

[1] H. Jones, *A Faith that Enquires*, 85.

tion that virtue is knowledge—without identifying the wise man with the righteous man, we need not hesitate to affirm a hidden but very real connection between truth and morality. True convictions will *tend* (we cannot say more) to produce morality; untrue convictions will gradually lead to the toleration and justification of immorality. The issue of these influences may never be seen in their fullness in any individual life; but taken over a length of time, and in a whole society, their results will be discernible as described.

The Reward.

Heb. xi. 6.—'But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.'

WITHOUT faith it is impossible to please God. But who wants to please Him? Do you? You want to please yourself, your family, your neighbours; but do you want to please God? Yes, you want to please God. You may not be ready to sacrifice much to please Him—your own will, your family's affection, the good will of your neighbours. But you want to please Him. Deep down in the heart of man, of every man, there lies the desire to please God. It is the secret of religion. It is the source of sacrificial worship. It is the meaning of the world's unrest and aspiration. Nothing is so true of human nature as the desire to please God. It is as manifest among the most degraded races as it is among the most civilized.

Well, it is impossible, says our writer, without faith. Of course it is. For faith is trust, and you can please nobody without trust. God is like us all in this. If we would please Him we must trust Him. Why does a child's hand laid in yours please you? Because it is a sign of trust. Why does the lisped word 'father' please you? It is a sign of confidence. When our Lord taught His disciples to pray, He said, 'When ye pray, say Father'—that is St. Luke's way of it and it is the true way. Begin your prayer by pleasing God, begin by trusting Him.

But our writer gives two ways of showing our faith in God. He says we must believe that He is, and we must believe that He is a rewarder.

1. We must *believe that He is*—that is, that He exists. Do you believe that? No doubt. They say that there are no atheists now. A believer in evolution, in that kind of evolution which says that out of an original germ cell all the universe has come, things without life, life itself, animals, men, and that God has never once interfered with the process—even he added, 'Yet I believe in God, I find belief in God a necessity to my mind.' There are no atheists left, they say, since Haeckel died. You believe that God exists.

But is that enough? What is the use of that, if that is all? You remember what Tennyson sings about the gods of Epicurus. They lived far away from men, enjoying themselves, and if they heard from a distance of wasted lands, blight and famine, sinking ships and praying hands, they only smiled. Is belief in that sort of god any use?

(1) To believe in God is to believe that He is *a creator*. It is to believe that 'the worlds were framed by the word of God,' as this writer puts it. It is to believe that he is my Creator. It is to believe that He made me for Himself so that my heart finds no rest until it finds its rest in Him.

(2) It is to believe that He is *my preserver* and bountiful benefactor. He did not make me and leave me to myself. He watches over me. He besets me behind and before and lays His hand on me. His mercies are new to me every morning and faithful towards me every evening. He guides me with His eye.

(3) And it is to believe that He *has redeemed me*. He loves me—that is the secret of belief in God. Do you believe that? If not, how little you know of God, how little you can do to please Him. He 'loved me, and gave himself for me.' That is the foundation of faith.

2. That first, then—we believe that He is. But we also *believe that He is a rewarder*. What does that mean? It means that we believe it is worth while, that it pays, to seek God.

But is not that a mercenary view of religion? Is it not the very thing with which worldly men taunt us? We are always looking for a reward, they say. And they assure us that the only genuine form of religion is that which is entirely disinterested. 'Religion for its own sake'—that is the blessed phrase they are delighted with. And no doubt it is because they cannot come upon religion

for its own sake anywhere that they prefer to be irreligious.

Ask them if anybody does anything without thought of reward. The workman works for wages—that is his immediate reward. And his more remote reward is his food, his home, his opportunity of finding pleasure or of doing good. The employer looks for a return for his capital, his time, and his thought. The men or women who do good in the most disinterested way that is possible still look for reward—the gratitude, or at least the good will, of their fellow-men, the approval of their conscience, or the good word of God. When we come to God we must believe that He is a rewarder just as surely as we must believe that He exists.

(1) This is the great problem of the Old Testament. The prophets and psalmists all believe that God is and that He is a rewarder. What puzzled them was the way in which He seemed to distribute His rewards. They expected that He would reward only those who diligently sought Him, but they found that the proud were often happy. No doubt their trouble was due to a mistaken idea of what God's rewards are.

(2) Accordingly, this was one of the things which Christ put right when He came. He told His disciples about the Pharisees. The Pharisees were bent on pleasing God. They believed that He is and that He is a rewarder. The reward they sought was the applause of the crowd. Well, they got it: 'Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.' What a poor reward it was. 'But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.' He did not say, Never think of a reward. He said, Think of the right reward. Peter once said to Jesus, 'Lo, we have left all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?' He was still at the Old Testament stage in his ideas about rewards. What an answer Jesus made him! First, it seemed as if He promised Peter those very earthly and ordinary rewards which were in his mind—houses and lands and children. But He added, 'with persecutions,' and that would make Peter think. He also added, 'and in the world to come eternal life.' Yes, work for reward, but let it be the right reward.

(3) And what is that? Well, no one can tell very fully. Eye hath not seen nor ear heard. St. Peter calls it 'an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away'—three beautiful adjectives in the Greek which he dwelt on lovingly. St. Paul calls it 'a crown of life.' St. John calls it by the fine word 'fellowship'—fellowship with God, he says, first, and then fellowship with the people of God: 'That ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' And that is what our Lord calls it. 'Eternal life' is His word. 'That where I am, there ye may be also.'

The Unseen.

(New Year).

Heb. xi. 7.—'Things not seen as yet.'

THE words are written concerning the experience of Noah. That experience came and passed very long ago, as we are accustomed to reckon time. 'Before the Flood' is one of our trite phrases for the remotest antiquity. And the stretch of history which lies between this day and that cheats us into the notion that those men themselves were as far off from us as their date is from ours. We may depend upon it, those men were very like ourselves. Had we been living alongside of Noah, had we been his friends, and enjoyed neighbourly talks with him, we would have been thus friendly with a man very much as men are still, and we ourselves would not have been very different from what we are now, nor would have felt very differently from what we feel now. Beneath the surface differences of century, and language, and custom, and climate, we would have found *men;* and men, in the deeper ways of them, are as unchanging as the stars which shine down upon the procession of their births and burials.

Not promising to confine ourselves to this historical instance, we shall view the thought of the text in two or three various aspects.

1. We stand to-day within sight of a retreating year. As we travelled together, yet travelled one by one, through its days and months, we were travelling into a blank of invisible space. Each step ahead was taken among 'things not seen—

as yet'; each look backward was upon things that now were seen, and the thing most clearly seen of all was the very step which last we had taken in the doubtful darkness. Where we were standing at any moment—that was the dividing line between seen and 'not seen,' and the 'as yet' kept just one pace in front of us all the way. Now the year lies, the whole of it, behind us; and we can gaze upon it, can follow its windings, can observe its dangers, can mark the spots where we stumbled, and we think we could walk it differently now. But we shall never in all eternity walk it again. We can look back, but we cannot go back. The going is all into the darkness. It is our back that is to the light—as long at least as time endures with us.

Not in the sunshine, not in the rain,
Not in the night of the stars untold,
Shall we ever all meet again,
Or be as we were in the days of old. [1]

Upon the threshold of the year, then, with all the knowledge and capacity and experience which some of us doubtless possess, we are not able to tell each other what the year shall bring for any of us. But there are some things we can tell each other, and which it were good we should. We can tell each other to be thankfully content with this ignorance. We can tell each other to live lives of preparedness for whatever God may send, or may permit to come—lives thoughtful and strong—counting on the likelihood of hard things, and watchful lest they should take us at a disadvantage. We can tell each other to be trustful—to school ourselves to leave the future in God's hands, and let Him freely take His way, because He still and always is good, and wishes only the best for us. We can tell each other to wrap ourselves round with patience as the year is opening, and to draw it tighter around us when trials move out of the darkness upon us, or when we find ourselves environed with unlooked-for calamity. We can confront the blank of the new year bravely, calmly, cheerily—making good use of the precious thought that the blank is full of God, and is throbbing through all its length with the perfect knowledge and the fatherly lovingkindness which are His.

[1] Walter C. Smith.

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith 'A whole I planned.
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all nor be afraid! [1]

2. It is striking to think that what we have not seen is immeasurably more than what we have seen, and that the utmost which the oldest and farthest-travelled of us have beheld is as nothing compared with what we shall yet behold. We have only begun our seeings. 'Not seen—as yet': what vastness of duration, what reaches of locality, does this phrase stretch forward to touch!—vastnesses and reaches beside which all our present experiences shrink to a trifle. The child of five years, just awakening to mark the slow unfolding of life from day to day, has seen scarcely a calculable fraction of what he will have seen when he comes to close his crowded career of fourscore birthdays, some of them spent among the ever-new incidents of his personal history. But the puniest portion of life is not small enough to stand to the whole of life as the whole of life stands to eternity. It is eternity that *is* a man's life; his life on earth is, in comparison, but his one birthday, with its morning and noon and evening, and its close.

Its close: how much is opened then to every one who has lived, longest or shortest, in this nursery of human existence! For it is not that then we settle into tracks of experience which hold forward evermore, with no barrier of death which every day is bringing nearer until we seem to stop and cease; it is not that then the dark mists which now overhang our future may in great part clear away. It is that we are then living amidst a state of things which before had been altogether invisible, and almost unimaginable, to us. True enough, even the morrow is 'not seen as yet'; but the morrow and its events will both of them come to pass among things that we do see now—in a world at least which we are looking upon to-day, and a world with which we are perhaps quite intensely familiar. True enough, every day brings its revealings as we go on through the years, but not one of them ever reveals a single glimpse of the world beyond, or lifts the curtain for a moment

[1] Browning, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.

from the immensities of reality which our eyes and ears cannot discern. They *are,* but they are not *seen.* They are around us, but they are invisible to us. For it is not distance only that makes the sight of them impossible to us; it is the conditions of our life, as a life which is constructed for the seeing and hearing of other things than these. It is no wild theory, but a fairly scientific one, among the theories of our day, that the invisible universe is folded up within the visible universe, and that the circumstances of eternity are going on before our unseeing eyes in the very midst of the circumstances of time. The great truth, however, which we may conjecture concerning it is simply this—that the eternal is to us, here and now, invisible—all it is and all it holds 'not seen.'

But about this also let us quote the text in full: 'Not seen—*as yet.*' These things are not invisible in the sense that we cannot possibly see them at all. They are not invisible in the sense that we were not made to see them. They are not invisible in the sense that we shall not see them. They are precisely the things that we were made most of all to see, and they are precisely the things that we are going on most of all to see. There are powers slumbering in us at this moment which have only to be set at liberty, and all that is now utter blank to us will become in that moment like a landscape on which the daylight has dawned. It is these powers which are our proper human powers; the power of seeing only the things we see to-day—this is a power which is fitted to a merely temporary state of life, and will soon be surpassed by far different vision.

O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
The eagle plunge to find the air—
That we ask of the stars in motion
If they have rumour of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars!—
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.[1]

[1] Francis Thompson, *The Kingdom of God.*

The Call.

Heb. xi. 8.—'When he was called.'

HAVE you ever noticed how often this expression appears? We may safely assert that not less than a hundred times the thoughts connected with the words 'call,' 'calling,' 'called' are to be found; and this word is also the central thought connected with salvation, with the spiritual life of those who are saved, and with the eternal glory which is to be revealed in them hereafter. So central is the thought that even the word 'Church' in the Greek is nothing but the expression of this idea—the 'calling out' of God, and the 'called out' by God; and the Church exists only on these conditions—that she received 'the call' from God, and that, recognizing the call, she became 'the called out one'; there is the Divine action and the human response.

Moreover, when we proceed to consider the provision that is made for our spiritual life and power, we are dealing at once with a kindred word. The title of 'Paraclete,' which is given both to Christ and to the Holy Spirit, is translated, concerning the Holy Ghost, as the 'Comforter,' and concerning the Christ, as the 'Advocate,' which is only the Latin form of Paraclete or 'called unto.' But there is this distinction: while the Church is the one 'called out,' the Advocate or the Comforter is the one 'called upon' or 'called in' by man, to *advocate,* to render him assistance in the hour of his need. We plead with the Saviour and the Holy Ghost to appear on our behalf, the One in the presence of the eternal God, the Other in the presence of our enemies, and we bring our personal needs before Them that they may be supplied. In each case there is included the thought of response to the call. The *Church* obeys the Lord's call to salvation and service; the *Paraclete* gives heed to the Church's call for comfort and support. The One hears the *calling-out;* the Other hears the *calling-upon;* but in each case, and therefore, in every part of the Christian's life upon earth, the idea of the 'calling' is the paramount or prominent feature of the whole.

1. The call of God comes to all. To the heart which has not yet found God, and which is tempted to live in accordance with the ideals of

selfishness and expediency, the call comes in the form of a summons to find its satisfaction and its home in the Father's love, and its rule of life in the pure example of Jesus Christ. Born in an animal body and reared in a selfish world, such a call seems to the natural man a summons to an unknown country—a great leap of faith. Peace can, however, come in no other way than by obedience. The heart will never rest except in the Father's service. Outward prosperity may not come to the obedient; he may, like Abraham, be all his life a pilgrim and a sojourner; and yet the future is his; he is building in the 'city which hath foundations.'

2. Often the call to enter upon some self-sacrificing service for others comes to hearts already possessed of God's peace. It means hardship, but it portends blessing to others. Such are the calls which have come in every age to the prophets, the reformers, and the missionaries. The illumination of a dark continent, the uplifting of the down-trodden, the prosperity of generations yet unborn, depend upon the response which a few individuals give to such calls. Obedience involves the leaving of home, or friends, or ease, or the esteem of contemporaries, but it also means fellowship with God in labour, and the founding of some new gate into the Holy City. Calls to similar, though less conspicuous, service come to us all. How seldom we are faithful as was Abraham!

¶ I think of public life; something worries me and I fall back into the life of leisure, to be pricked to the will to act by reading some brave words or seeing some fine example. And to put what I endure into a simile, it is not the tempest that troubles me, but sea-sickness. [1]

3. There are periods when the Divine call comes to all men to move from the old regions of their thought and beliefs into new intellectual worlds. Such a period came to Europe at the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation, and another has come to the modern world within the past century. We have been called upon to leave the old intellectual paths which had grown familiar to our ancestors, and had been hallowed to us by the footsteps of many whom we loved and revered, and to go out, not knowing whither we should be led. Many have hesitated; many have gone unwillingly; some have refused to go at all. A few, with Abraham's faith and with spirits of prophets, have gone with trustful and buoyant hearts, confident that God was thus leading to a better intellectual and spiritual future. The next generation will recognize their moral heroism.

¶ The thunderbolt has fallen with a vengeance now. On Friday night in the course of conversation my father put me one or two questions as to my beliefs which I answered candidly—and now my father and mother are both ill, both silent, both as down in the mouth as if—I can find no simile. If it were not too late I think I could almost find it in my heart to retract, but it is too late; and again am I to live my whole life as one falsehood? I am not, as they call me, a careless infidel. I believe as much as they do only generally in the inverse ratio. I am, I think, as honest as they can be in what I hold. Here is a good heavy cross with a vengeance, and all rough with rusty nails that tear your fingers, only it is not I that have to carry it alone. I hold the light end but the heavy burden falls on them. [1]

4. As we near life's boundary—and it is often much nearer than we think—the summons comes to us all to go out into the great unknown country of the other life. Can we go calmly and trustfully, confident of the Father's goodness? The spiritual children of Abraham are able to sing with Whittier:

> I know not where His islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air;
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond His love and care.

[1] Serenus.

The Adventure of Faith.

Heb. xi. 8.—'He went out, not knowing whither he went.'

ABRAHAM heard the voice of the God who had a message, a mission, a call for his soul—a message which meant spiritual freedom, a mission which could be fulfilled only by obedience, a call which said, 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will shew thee.' Think what that involved—separation from the past, renunciation of all his

[1] Stevenson, *Letters*, i. 40.

customs and plans of life, the entrance upon an untrodden path, the following of an unseen and absolute guidance, the consecration of his life to a journey through strange lands, among strange people, towards a strange goal, and the final and supreme adventure of his soul. But Abraham obeyed the call. 'He went out, not knowing whither he went.' And that was faith.

Let us think for a little while of this aspect of faith. It is an adventure. It is going out into the unknown future under the guidance of God.

1. All faith recognizes that life is a pilgrimage whose course and duration cannot be foreseen. That is true, indeed, whether we acknowledge it or not. Even if a man should fancy that his existence was secure, and that he could direct his own career and predict his own future, experience would teach him his mistake. But the point is that faith recognizes this uncertainty of life at the outset, and in a peculiar way, which transforms it from a curse into a blessing and makes it possible for us even to be glad that we must 'go out, not knowing whither we go.'

For what is it that faith does with these lives of ours? It just takes them up out of our weak, trembling, uncertain control and puts them into the hands of God. It makes them a part of His great plan. It binds them fast to His pure and loving will, and fills them with His life. Unless we believe that God has made us and made us for Himself, unless we believe that He has something for each one of us to do and to be, unless we believe that He knows what our life's way should be and has marked it out for us, how is it possible for us to go forward with cheerful confidence? But if we do believe this, then of course we shall be willing to accept our own ignorance of the future, and, so far from hindering us in our advance, it will encourage and strengthen us to remember that the meaning of our life is so large that we cannot understand it. It will not fit into our broken and imperfect knowledge just because it does fit perfectly into the great wisdom of God.

2. This, then, is the broadest meaning of faith's adventure: it is the surrender of life to a hidden guidance. And bound up together with this, as an essential part of it, we find the necessity that faith should accept the religious life as an adventure full of unknown trials and tests and temptations. No one can tell beforehand just how many hardships he must pass through, just how many sacrifices he must make, just how many assaults of evil he must resist, if he sets out to walk with God.

Abraham did not know what would meet him on his life-long journey: the day of peril in Egypt when he would break down and disgrace himself; the day of dissension with Lot when he would prove his fidelity and his love; the days of conflict with the Rephaim and the Zuzim and the Emim and the Horites, when he would overthrow them; the day of temptation when the king of Sodom would offer to make him rich; the day of sharpest sorrow when he would be called to show his supreme devotion by resigning his beloved son into the hands of the Lord—all these days were hidden from him as he entered upon the long journey. All that God required of him was that he would meet them as they came; not beforehand, in imagination, in promise and definite resolution, but at the appointed hour, in the crisis of trial: then, and not till then, Abraham must face his conflict, and make his sacrifice, and hold fast his faith.

Not otherwise does God deal with us. He does not show us exactly what it will cost to obey Him. He asks us only to give what He calls for from day to day. Here is one sacrifice right in front of us that we must make now in order to serve God—some evil habit to be given up, some lust of the flesh to be crucified and slain; and that is our trial for to-day. But to-morrow that trial may be changed from a hardship into a blessing, it may become a joy and triumph to us; and another trial, new, different, unforeseen, may meet us in the way. Now, perhaps, it is poverty that you have to endure, fighting with its temptations to envy and discontent, and general rebellion against the order of the world; ten years hence, it may be wealth that will test you with its temptations to pride, and luxury, and self-reliance, and general arrogance toward your fellow-men. Now, it may be some selfish indulgence that you have to resign; to-morrow, it may be someone whom you love, from whom you must consent to part at the call of God. To-day, it may be your ease, your comfort, your indolence that you must sacrifice for the sake of doing good in the world; to-morrow, it may be your activity, your energy, the work you

delight in, that you must give up while sickness lays its heavy hand upon you, and bids you 'stand and wait.' To-day one thing, to-morrow another thing; and God does not tell you what it will be: He calls you to go out into your adventure not knowing whither you go.

Have you lifted anchor and hoisted sail?
Does your ship stand out to sea?
Have you scoffed at peril and dared the gale
When the waves and the wind are free?

Is safety a thought that you count disgrace
When duty and danger call?
Would you stand on the deck with a smile on your face
And perish the first of all?

Is your old sail salt with the frozen foam,
And gray as a sea gull's wing?
Do you never long for land and home
When the great waves clutch and cling?

Oh, the Sea of Faith hath storms, God knows,
And the haven is very far;
But he is my brother-in-blood who goes
With his eye on the polar star.

With his hand on the canvas, his foot on the ropes,
His heart beating loud in his breast,
With dauntless courage and quenchless hopes,
And the old divine unrest!

The swift keels chafe in the harbor of Doubt!
They were built for the glorious blue,
Where the stout masts bend and the sailors shout,
And the wave-drench'd compass is true!

Then here's my hand, O lad of my heart,
O dauntless spirit and free!
The tide is high; they strain, they start!—
The ships of the infinite Sea! [1]

3. Once more, the adventure of faith involves the going out to meet unknown duties and to perform hidden tasks. In one sense the scheme and outline of a religious life are clear and distinct beforehand; the principles of faith and hope and love by which it is to be guided, the laws of righteousness and truth and mercy by which it is to be governed, are fixed and unchangeable, the same always and for all men. But in another sense the religious life has no scheme or outline at all. Its responsibilities, its opportunities, its labours arise from day to day. One man has one thing to do; another man has another thing to do. The duty of the present may be changed, enlarged, transformed in the future.

See how this is brought out in the life of Abraham. At first he has only to bear witness to the true God among an idolatrous people; and then he has to set out on a perilous journey towards Canaan; and then he has to take care of his flocks and herds in the wilderness; and then he has to deliver his kinsman Lot from the sword of the tyrant Chedorlaomer; and then he has to exercise hospitality towards the angels of God. Abraham's duty is not written down and delivered to him at the beginning. It is kept secret from him, and he goes out to meet it, not knowing what it will be.

That is the law of the life of faith. The man who takes a principle into his heart commits himself to an uncertainty, he enters upon an adventure. He must be ready for unexpected calls and new responsibilities.

The Samaritan who rode down from Jerusalem to Jericho had nothing to do in the morning but follow that highway, and take care that his beast did not stumble or hurt itself, or get tired out so that it could not finish the journey. He was just a solitary horseman, and all that he needed to do was to have a good seat in the saddle and a light hand on the bit. But at noon, when he came to the place where that unknown pilgrim lay senseless and bleeding beside the road—then, in a moment, the Samaritan's duty changed, and God called him to be a rescuer, a nurse, a helper of the wounded.

Peter, when he rested on the housetop in Joppa, was only a pastor of the Jewish Christian Church; his mission was to instruct and guide his kinsmen according to the flesh. But when the great vision of a catholic church flashed upon him, when the knocking of the messengers of the Roman centurion sounded up from the gate of the courtyard, then, in a moment, Peter's duty was changed, and he was called to go to the house of a Gentile and proclaim the gospel of Christ without respect of persons. Read the lives of the heroes of faith, and you will find that they are all like this. They set out to perform, not one task only, but anything

[1] F. L. Knowles.

that God may command. They accept Christ's commission, and set sail upon an unknown ocean with sealed orders.

4. Only one word remains to be added. Faith is an adventure; it is the courage of the soul to face the unknown. But that courage springs from the hope and confidence of the soul that its adventure will succeed. Beyond the unknown, beyond the uncertainties and perils and responsibilities of the earthly future, it sees the certain, the secure, the imperishable—'an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.'

How grandly that certainty of faith comes out in the story of Abraham! A pilgrim and a stranger, a man without a country, wandering up and down between the lands of Egypt and Chaldea, involved in strange conflicts and unexpected trials, a sojourner in the land of promise as in a land not his own, that noble old father of the faithful, that loyal friend and follower of God, was never an aimless man, never an uncertain man, never a hopeless man. He went forth not knowing whither he went, but he also looked for 'a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.'

Sublime assurance, glorious pilgrimage! And is not that the type and symbol of the life of faith? Of the nearer future, the future that lies among the mountains and valleys, the pastures and deserts of this world, it is ignorant, and yet it does not fear to face it; for it sees that the final future, the blessed rest and reward of the soul that serves and follows its Divine Master, is secure. It knows whither Christ has gone, and it knows the hidden way. And along that way it presses steadily to its goal of everlasting peace.

Before me lies an unknown sea,
The port is left behind;
Strong waves are foaming at the prow,
The sails bend to the wind.

What is my quest? What fare I forth?
Not mine it is to say,
He whom I serve has given command,
I have but to obey.

So to the overguiding Will
My own I gladly yield,
And while my little craft outstands,
I sail with orders sealed.

I may not read them if I would,
I would not if I might;
Nor hold the duty less, but more,
Whose chart is faith, not sight.

Some time, I know not when or how,
All things will be revealed;
And until then content am I
To sail with orders sealed.

Not Knowing.

Heb. xi. 8.—'He went out, not knowing whither he went.'

He went out! There is a fine expansiveness in the phrase. It seems to extend the range of vision to the distant peaks and far horizons of life, suggesting a life that is endless in the variety of its interests and enchantments. Someone has strikingly said that the symbol of Christ's kinghood is not a circle but a cross; for a circle is self-contained, but a cross extends infinitely to all points of the compass.

Not knowing whither he went! Does that sound somewhat unpractical in the atmosphere of present-day business life? Yet, according to Carlyle, he goes farthest who does not know where he is going; like John Wesley, for instance, who never dreamed when he went out that his quest would take him across the threshold of the Church of his fathers; or Martin Luther, who never conceived when he started that he was going out of the Roman Church into the Bible Free State; or the Pilgrims of the 'Mayflower,' who never thought as they embarked that they were to lay the foundations of the greatest Republic the world has ever seen.

After all, it is the so-called unpractical people who do not go by the chart but make a new chart, who discover the islands. So Columbus came across America, and in far-away days Abraham found the promised land, because he went out, not knowing whither he went.

1. 'He went out, not knowing whither he went.' Here you have a suggestion of the *mystery* of religion.

The Christian religion has a great mystery at

its centre. 'Great is the mystery of godliness.' And that is the secret of its deathless youth. Time writes no wrinkles on its brow. It keeps alive that sense of wonder which makes a man a poet, a seer, a mystic, or whatever you please to call the man who sees God.

The New Testament name for him is child. Everyone must enter the Kingdom of God, says Jesus, like a little child. And he must continue a child at heart. Once that sense of wonder is gone, you do not know where he will end. He may end in business and become very wealthy; he may end as a mere scientist, or a mere politician, or even a cynic. Once that sense of wonder is lost, the splendour of life is gone, a glory passes from the earth, and we find ourselves longing for the things which we have seen, but now can see no more.

The spirit of mystery has a poor time of it nowadays. The veil is being unceremoniously torn from most things in our time. Doors long thought closed are being forced open. The age of discovery is apt to be impatient with any kind of mystery. It would even fling aside the veil of the tabernacle and bring out the ark into the outer courts. The age of discovery has not much love for the dim religious light; it longs to switch the full glare of the electric light even on to the mystic altar.

There was something valuable in that attitude —now obsolete—which made us address the little star and say—

> Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
> How I wonder what you are.

Every fourth and fifth standard now supplies the answer, and we say—

> Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
> Now we all know what you are.

The earth again has become geographical. We lost the North Pole when Peary found it. But it was not worth finding. There was nothing there—not even a pole—when they got there. It should have been left a mystery region for the imagination to play in!

When the biologist and the psychologist have had their say, and reduced man—as they think—to pure physical processes, why, the man they've reduced sees a sunset or a primrose, or hears the lark, or stands by the grave of his little child, and the old, old mystery of life and eternity and God flashes once more upon his way, disturbing him

> With the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

Life loses its depth and fragrance without some centre of religious mystery to keep alive the sense of wonder and reverence.

2. 'He went out, not knowing whither he went.' There is here a suggestion of the *romance* of the religious life.

A small book by an American author had a great reception some years ago. It was called 'Blessed be Drudgery.' Now a more depressing title it would be difficult to conceive. Why should we canonize drudgery? It is the most unromantic thing in life, and to call life drudgery is to handicap it at the start. Christ's religion never blesses it. It does something very different; it transfigures it. And that is certainly part of the glory of Christianity. Christ's greatest service has been put thus: seeing values, freeing values, enhancing values. According to the definition of a popular dictionary, the difference between a romance and a novel is that the former gives more scope for imagination and idealization. And what is idealization but enhancing values? Modern novels are realistic. That is why they die—so many of them —like summer flies. Instead of enhancing, they depreciate values. To idealize life is to see it in its true proportions—to see it in the light of Christ. 'The vulgar saw thy tower,' says Browning; 'thou sawest the sun.' The novel, with its realism, sees Lazarus at the gates, with the dogs and his sores; it takes Jesus to see Lazarus with Abraham in blessedness. That is to say, Jesus sees that Lazarus is the heir of God in disguise.

There is a striking memorial of Gordon outside Khartoum. It is a statue of him, seated on a dromedary, facing the desert. A visitor looking at it one day turned to his guide and said: 'Ought not the figure to have faced the city?' 'No, sir,' said the Arab; 'they set him looking not towards the palace where he lived, nor towards the Nile by which he might have escaped, but towards the

Soudan, for which he died. He is waiting, sir,' concluded the Arab, 'for the morning to dawn.' That is the light which shines from Christianity upon all who receive it. It lights up all men with the glory of the coming morning.

3. But Christianity ought most of all to appeal to youth because of its stirring call to the spirit of *adventure*. The more you truly reflect the more convinced you will become that the Christian life is the one sphere that thrills with excitement, full as it is of perils and adventures and hairbreadth escapes.

> Magic casements opening on the foam of perilous seas.

One of the most exciting books in our language is Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. It ranks next to the Bible, which is the most exciting book of all. The *Pilgrim's Progress* holds the true reader entranced and spellbound from first to last. And yet it is merely a pictorial description of the stirring adventures that a Christian goes through daily in obedience to his Lord. Bunyan simply described that inward Christian experience which every true follower of Christ shares. He was the special war correspondent of the soul, reporting graphically the moving incidents in that ancient Armageddon, in which generation after generation has to take part. If we had but a small portion of his grace of imagination we could each bear witness to the truth that the one sphere of real adventure is the Christian life.

God's own Son chose the democratic carpenter's bench. You can follow any calling you like. Paul was a Christian tent-maker, and Lydia a Christian dye-seller. The tents of the Apostle were Christian tents, as conscientiously made as his theological epistles. You can be almost a Christian anything. There is just one thing you cannot be—a Christian coward. Christ draws the line just there.

It is the unchristian man who grows tired of life; it is the man of sin who is bored to extinction by the drudgery and drab monotony of his days.

Listen to this:

> My days are in the yellow leaf;
> The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
> The worm, the canker, and the grief
> Are mine alone.

Who says so? Byron, the most brilliant genius of modern literature, who was also a profligate.

Or listen to this:

> Out, out, brief candle—
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more; it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.

Who says so? Macbeth the murderer.

Hear these words, 'Not as though I had already attained . . . but I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' Do you not like them better?

Years ago an inscription was placed over the City Hall of Florence by the City Fathers:

> 'Jesus Christ, elected by the Decree of the Senate, King of the Florentine People.'

That is our dream for the world—Jesus Christ, elected by the nations of the earth, King of the peoples of the world.

'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.' Do not forget, we have a King! Then follow the King!

> Follow the Christ, the King,
> Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King—
> Else, wherefore born?[1]

The Romance of Religion.

Heb. xi. 8.—'He went out not knowing whither he went.'

THE religion of Jesus Christ is brimful of romance. It was to the poetical side of man—to the feelings, to the imagination, to the chivalrous emotions—that our Lord most loved to appeal. He did not address Himself primarily to the intellect, nor did He propose to convert the world by syllogism. His method was rather to stir up an ardour for excellent things, to kindle a passion of interest which should mightily catch men away towards great visions and great tasks. Thus He came to men romantically as a Leader and a King. 'Follow,' He said. 'Come and follow Me. Take up your cross and follow.' How inspiring is the

[1] Tennyson, *Gareth and Lynette*.

call! It suggests the open way, the setting forward to a goal, the floating banner. 'Follow,' Christ says. Do you see how He thrills us with the spirit of adventure? Do you see how He lures us on to daring enterprise? Irresistibly He summons us—summons us to take the road of which a modern writer speaks, 'which leads to the light on the far horizon, and beyond to the presence of God.'

1. Look at religion in its romantic aspect. And consider it first as the great intellectual adventure, the experiment of the mind, the pursuit of the Vision Splendid amid the forms and phases of transitory things. Genius has been spoken of by Frederic Myers as 'a kind of exalted but developed clairvoyance.' But religion is also a kind of clairvoyance. It is the divination of God. In the centre of the temporal it would probe to the Eternal. Behind the earthly shadows it would move towards the Light in the rays of which the universe shall be glorified and transfigured.

The search for God amid the common things of life—is not this a labour that is worthy of our intellect? And is it not one very necessary in this age? We live, most of us, in a world of but too substantial fact. Things compass us on every side, environ us, shut us in. We cannot get beyond them. We cannot get through them. We cannot get over them. We are prisoners, as it were, in a crass, material universe, in the solid walls of which we can find no door of escape. Nature, we see, with its iron laws and its inevitable sequences. Human life we see—its follies and sins, its pitiful sorrows and still more pitiful pleasures, its desolate dullness, its tragic ineptitude.

But it is here that religion helps us—religion with its romance, with its hill-top lights and vistas, with its stimulus to go farther and deeper and higher. It bids us be brave and bold, for behind the varied show of outward things there stretch the unseen lands where dwelleth God. If only we have the courage to make spiritual adventure, the known becomes our pathway to a loftier mystery, which in its turn guides our steps to Him who is the Beginning and the End of all.

2. But, secondly, religion involves not only intellectual adventure—the quest of the vision of God; it involves, moreover, moral adventure. It is the romance of the will which, undeterred by obstacles, goes forth in search of goodness. There is nothing, perhaps, which strikes one more forcibly in reading the Gospels than the magnificent confidence with which our Lord incites His followers to extraordinary moral enterprise. No task is too difficult, no sacrifice too great for Him to ask of them. With superb disdain He sets aside all fears and doubts and prudences. 'Be of good cheer,' He cries to the fainting hearts—'Courage'! It is simply a question of trustful endeavour. Let men but try, let them but risk the adventure, let them but trust in God and essay the impossible thing, and the thing will be done. 'All things are possible to him that believeth.' It is certainly astonishing, this romantic appeal to heroism. Christ calls men to a Divine life; He bids them be perfect as their Father in heaven; He enjoins on them conduct which none of the ancient moralists ever dreamt of asking, and which many modern moralists summarily dismiss as an impracticable ideal; and He protests that all is possible if they will only trust and dare. Yet has not the Master's faith in men been amply justified? The disciples of Jesus were not, as a rule, exceptional people, but He so fired them with a sense of power and privilege and opportunity that they were able to conquer in righteousness the mightiest forces of the world. 'I can do all things,' says St. Paul, 'in him that strengtheneth me.' And St. Cyprian later tells a similar tale. 'After I had breathed the heavenly Spirit in myself . . . what was formerly hard seemed feasible, and what had appeared impossible seemed capable of being done.'

In one of his books Mr. Benson has described romance as 'a certain high-hearted, eager dealing with life.' And it is precisely this attitude, this lofty, courageous temper, that is demanded for moral excellence. The thing that is needed here is unqualified venturesomeness. We must dare to put out, to launch clear away into the depth of great ideals, or we shall never make advancement.

If we fail, if we fall, it is certainly not of necessity. It is because we will not cultivate the heroism of romance. It is because we will not yield to the inspiration of enthusiasm. It is because we will not thoroughly commit ourselves to what is noble, or put forth the powers of our manhood to the uttermost and to the last. As Christina Rossetti sings:—

"Little or great is man;
Great if he will, or if he will
A pigmy still,
For what he will, he can.

Restlessness and Rest.

Heb. xi. 9, 10.—'Dwelling in tents . . . he looked for a city.'

ABRAHAM was a dweller in a tent: that fact had made a deep impression on the writer; and immediately he tells us the secret of that tent-life—'he looked for a city whose builder and maker is God.'

We must emphasize the contrast between the city and the tent. The patriarch lived in the tent; he looked for the city. The tent has no foundations. Its holdfasts are only for transient usage. They are made to be easily changed. The city has foundations. It is stable, fixed, and permanent. The tent is the symbol of vagrancy: the city is the symbol of home. The tent is associated with the evanescent and changing: the city is associated with the continuous and the abiding. Abraham dwelt in the land of promise in tents, but 'he looked for a city.' He longed for settledness. He yearned for the abiding.

Now we are all the children of promise. A kingdom has been promised to us; not a material kingdom, traversed by lines of latitude and longitude, but a spiritual kingdom, the inheritance of the saints in light. This kingdom abounds in 'things that are freely given to us of God'—moral forces, spiritual graces, strength, and beauty—from the sanctuary of the Eternal. Some of us have crossed the borders of the land. We are in the kingdom of promise. But how? Some are in the kingdom in shifting tents. Others are in the kingdom in settled cities. Some people's religious life is full of a restless change; others have a life full of a deep and fruitful homeliness, of rich and assured peace. How many of us only enjoy the kingdom by spasms! We have short seasons of possession. We are dwellers in tents, and have no fixed and settled abode. It is the gracious purpose of our Lord that our religious life should be a certain and continuous possession. He wants it to be a ceaseless 'abiding,' and not a few detached and uncertain seasons.

Here is part of the promised inheritance: 'I will give you rest.' Have we got a fixed house in that land, a settled home? Do we abide in His rest, or have we got only a tent possession? Do we have only infrequent seasons of rest—rest for a day, and then on the morrow are we troubled foot-sore wanderers again? In this land of rest have we only a tent? Let us look for a city.

Here is another element in the promised lot: 'My joy I give unto you.' 'My joy'—spiritual cheerfulness, the light of the Father's countenance, a radiant hopefulness, a religious gladness. Such is the land. Have we settled homes in it, or only shifting tents? Do we 'rejoice evermore,' or is our joy irregular and uncertain? Let us look for the city.

Our peril is that we become contented with the tent-life, satisfied with religious fragments. We have no strong violent hunger for a religious life of heroic and unbroken consistency. We become contented with religious seasons, and all the while our Master is pleading with us to 'abide in Him,' to 'rest in Him,' to make Him our fixed 'dwelling-place,' and our 'eternal home.' Let us eagerly listen to Him, and, leaving the vagrant tent-life, seek 'the city which hath foundations,' and 'dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'

How eagerly Jesus urged this continuous dwelling. 'If ye abide, and my words abide.' And what then? He also abides. 'Some time ago' says H. W. Morrow, 'I read in one of your papers an account of a religious service held by one of our chaplains right up in the firing line. During the singing of the closing hymn, the roar of the guns became so awful that it was impossible for the men to hear each other's voices, though they could see their lips move; but when the lull came, they found to their surprise that they were all singing together the line: "in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me."'[1]

The Forward Gaze.

Heb. xi. 10.—'He looked for a city which hath foundations.'

Heb. xi. 16.—'They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.'

THE life which breathes in these two sentences is glowing with the rapture of the forward gaze. It would be easy to multiply such sentences, for they are characteristic of the mental and spiritual pose of the New Testament, and one finds it everywhere. The Apostles are possessed by a spirit of

[1] *War and Immortality*, 151.

great expectancy. They are continually making discoveries along the road, and every new discovery sends them forward with richer hope. They 'feel the days before them.' To-morrow has a wondrous lure. The unknown is the hiding-place of precious deposits, and every stage in the journey feeds their ardour, for the new stage meets them with auspicious and welcoming face. So that in no way can it be said that these apostolic folk are 'stepping westward,' toward sunsets, toward spent and fading days; rather are they stepping eastward, with their faces toward new dawns, toward the ever-unfolding glory of ever brightening day. This is the forward look, this is the splendid pose of hope.

1. This does not mean that the disciples of Christ find no inspiration in the past, or that they never retread old roads, or revive the experiences of other days. The Christian has wonderful waters of inspiration in country already crossed, and he loves to visit the springs. There is the day when first he met the Lord, when all things became new—that miraculous moment when his guilt fell away like a loathsome robe, and he found himself clothed in the garment of salvation. Then there is the Providence which has accompanied him ever since he stood at those wonderful springs, and which shines like an unbroken light across the years. Who is there who does not like to walk quietly along that shining road, and again and again say to himself, 'Here the grace of God met and strengthened me'? Yesterday is full of miracle, and there is inspiration in the remembrance of it. Do ye not remember the miracle of the loaves? Do ye not remember His love in times past? You are on the way to Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey, but do ye not remember the angel's visit at midnight and the shattering of Egypt's bondage? Such recollection almost repeats the miracle, and it brings fresh oil to the lamp of hope. 'Forget not all his benefits.'

2. But while all this is true, it is equally true to say that the golden age is not behind. It is before us. All the better and best things are waiting for us higher up the road—new findings in revelation and power, new and deeper secrets in Divine fellowship and union. The 'better' thing is the next thing to be grasped—a better friendship with Christ, a better knowledge of the Word, a better interpretation of the mysteries of His grace. The 'better' is just ahead of us, luring us onward, and the lure moves forward as we make every new possession. On this climbing road there is many a 'Rest-and-be-thankful,' but the rest is only the preparation for further advance. We go forward from glory unto glory.

3. And this pose of expectancy is one of the secrets of the splendid virility which distinguishes the men and women of apostolic days. There is nothing like hope for keeping the heart young and the feet nimble. When we close the windows of hope the flame of life begins to die down from sheer exhaustion. It is hope which provides the mystic oxygen for our ardours, and without it they begin to fade. If hope changes entirely into memory, and our cheery light is all behind us, the heart soon grows old and cold, and the feet are very heavy on the road. It is prospect that inspires. We are trudging along the road, and the city is yonder with its gleaming minarets and towers. Forward into light! That was the hopeful venturing spirit of the early apostles. They had the vigour of athletes. Their hope got into their blood like wine.

And so, in trying to discover their secret, we must relate their labour to their hope. It is their expectancy which accounts for their experience. They are children of light, and therefore their labour is never servitude. They are as birds of the morning, and they sing in the light of the dawn. The God of hope fills them with all joy and peace in believing.[1]

A Defence of Idealism.

Heb. xi. 13.—'These all died in faith, not having received the promises.'

NOWHERE in literature will you find a bolder plea for Idealism; a more confident assurance that it is only while and so long as we keep dreaming the big audacious splendid dreams that life appears to prove impossible, that we are really sane; that your man of sturdy common-sense who boasts that he, at least, has no illusions and sees things bluntly as they really are and walks on solid earth, is so

[1] J. H. Jowett, in *The British Weekly*, Jan. 19, 1922.

stupid a creature as to be barely credible; that the too ethereal visions that won't weave into the drab grey stuff of actuality are far nearer the ultimate essential reality of things than his crude obvious staring facts; and that a life succeeds only in so far as one remains faithful to these seeming insubstantialities, still holds to them, and still believes in them, and still remains undauntedly confident—in spite of years of failure and resultlessness or little more—that in the end they all must, and will, come true; and so keeps working hopefully and expectantly for what others have long ago peevishly pushed from them as a manifest and proved impossibility—as what no doubt ought to be, but evidently can't be, in this disillusionizing earth. It is such souls that keep the world alive, that make progress possible, that bring pleasure to God's heart at sight of the bigness and gallantry of the great creature that His hands have fashioned. A plea for idealism; a defence of the dreaming of dreams, and the seeing of visions, and the holding doggedly to the belief—in spite of much disheartening experience—that anything may happen in this wonderful world; and that, where God is, the best is the most probable.

After all, says this Scripture, who were these ancestors of ours who so pleased God; what was it in them that commended them so signally to Him, that He felt here at last is a little knot of men and women such that through them I can reach and bless the whole round world; what was the quality in these primitive people's characters that gave God His opportunity and His chance?

Somewhere in the neighbourhood of Ur, that vast manufacturing city, a group of ardent spirits stumbled somehow on a noble conception of life, of the lofty uses to which it can be put, and, sickening of the grossness and the low ideals round them, dreamed, like the Pilgrim Fathers thousands of years later, of a new, clean land, free from this pollution that was choking them, where their souls could breathe, and where they could offer a worthy service to a Holy gracious worthy God. And, seeing, they rose up, left all, and followed, never doubting that they would reach their goal; for it was God Himself, they felt, who was calling them, and His hand that kept tugging urgently at their sleeves, and His own voice that, with explicitness and in so many words, had promised them the fair land of their dream. And yet the long years came and went, and absolutely nothing happened; no foot of land did they possess, except some purchased graves. The young heads that dreamed the dream had become white, the little stock of years in which it was possible was rapidly shrinking and dwindling to nothingness, and still, a little clan of Bedouin sheperds or the like, they were blown about an inhospitable, and, for them, homeless world. Everyone else laughed at the daft adventure which had ended, as all sane people had always known it would, in just nothing at all; at the huge hopes and the meagre results. But they themselves never wavered; hoped, believed, waited in a fever of expectancy for what might come at any moment—on to the very end; and died at last still confidently believing in what they had never realized.

These all died in faith, not having received what was promised them; tricked, cheated, empty-handed, poor duped fools, their gorgeous cloud palaces proved to be what, for all their colouring, every sane mind had always known they were—mere banks of wet, dank, clammy mist! They were so sure, would not be convinced, held to it obstinately; and, in spite of their dogged certainty, they were quite wrong. And so it always is, cry many desponding and cynical voices. Experience brings disillusionment; a little knowledge of life, and the big dreams go out and leave only ashes, cold, black, dead! Who ever started with a fairer vision of mankind than Shakespeare? Who ever ended with a sourer and more bitter view? And it did not pass, as they try to prove it did. Who ever had more glorious visions than John Keats? Yet Haydon tells us that the last time he saw him he was lying in bed, a hectic flush upon his cheeks, sore at the treatment he had received, disgusted at the whole affair of life, going out with a contempt for this world, and no hope of any other! Better face the ugly facts! What are all your gallantries and your self-sacrifices except foolishness? What comes of your hopes for the amelioration of this stubborn world, that doesn't want to be uplifted, shakes off your hand angrily, and so turns back again to its sottish slumbers? And do not all the panaceas, heralded triumphantly as the universal cure for every ill providentially discovered at last, fizzle out, one by one, like all their predecessors? Always, they are so sure, and always, little or nothing comes of

it. Browning makes Paracelsus say, at the high moment when he was dedicating his life to a noble purpose,

> I see my way, as birds their trackless way.
> I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
> I ask not: but unless God send his hail
> Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
> In some time, his good time, I shall arrive:
> He guides me and the bird. In his good time!

Yet he too failed; and it all started so hopefully, it all came to nothing.

He himself, at his big moments, did not think so. 'What's failure or success to me? I have subdued my life to the one purpose whereto I had ordained it.' What's failure or success to us? If we see the vision and hold to it, if we have some home-sickness for God's best and won't take anything lower in exchange for it; if, like Columbus with the angry clamour growing round him, we still gaze steadfastly westward, with eyes fastened steadily on the grey blank of sea and sky, are still sure of the land which to everyone else has been proved a mere stupid impossible myth; if we can gain something of the spirit of the Master, the wonderful Master, the Carpenter who believed that this poor world could be won back for God, that He could do it, and started on that hopefully; and when the popularity died down and the people deserted Him and all men's laughter rang in His ears, held on without a tremor; and, even when He saw that the end must be a hangman's gibbet, argued, 'Well, if so, somehow it will come that way,' 'I if I be lifted up . . . will draw all men unto me'; and died at last, there in the darkness round the Cross, without one soul that understood or really believed, still believing, with the shout of a conqueror, 'It is finished! It is done!' If we can keep our hopes alight, and our faith glowing, and our courage undiminished, can die still believing in what we never saw, still sure that this is God's world, and that He must win in the end, then our life also, though it seems to have nothing to show for it, has been lived on a big plan, and has effected far more to help others round about us than we ourselves can credit, has awakened frank and open admiration in God's heart. 'Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'

If! Yes but it is so easy to lose heart, to grow discouraged, to fall into step with others, to allow ourselves to be carried along by the pressure of the crowd, to let the world persuade us it was all a boyish dream, which a little knowledge of life shows to be out of the question and too good to be true, and to be hidden away out of sight, with some shame of face, like one's childish toys now that one has grown up. That is a depressing picture that Wordsworth gives of the average mental experience:

> Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
> Shades of the prison-house begin to close
> Upon the growing Boy,
> But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
> He sees it in his joy;
> The Youth, who daily farther from the east
> Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
> And by the vision splendid
> Is on his way attended;
> At length the Man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day.

That is too often true. Every new generation starts, hotly dissatisfied with the world as they find it, and sure that they can put it to rights, but by the time that they are middle-aged they are as prosy and fat and bovine and contented as their predecessors were. The low morning sun lights up a wet sodden earth, and for a little it is all a splendour—the very rain-drops on the fences a glistening glory, the very puddles on the muddy road burnished sheets of gold. But the clouds come up, and the day proves just as grey and watery as all the yesterdays. Stevenson, speaking for youth, voices the fury with which it listens to a middle-aged gentleman waggling his head and saying, as if that settled things, 'So I thought when I was your age'; shouts at him in a kind of ungovernable rage, 'And I may think as you do when I too have grown obese and silly and tamed like you.' Yes, he will likely grow quite tame. It's no great matter that the young men should see visions, that is natural; but that the old men should still undauntedly be dreaming dreams, that is the glory of the prophet's claim. 'For the wettest of wet blankets,' says Lord Morley, with his enormous experience of life, 'give me the middle-aged man who was most of a visionary in

his youth.' It is for you and me to see to it that that is not true of us.

If they had wished, says this great writer, no doubt they might have had opportunity to return. Yes, the way back is always open, and always inviting to tired feet. They could have slunk back to Ur, like the disciples to Galilee, facing the amused eyes of the long village street, their dreams all out, their hopes all dead, back to the hard sordid unpoetic realities of life—hauling nets, and wet cold nights, and the old familiar sights and scenes and smells. Have you noticed how Bunyan emphasizes that, underlining it over and over, how all the way they are met by folk returning—some sad enough, with the glory of life vanished from them; some laughing to think that there are still silly fools chasing what they have long ago satisfied themselves has no existence? And how is it with us? Are we as sure that the world can be won as we were before these disappointing years, or have we really come to the conclusion that this dour intractable lump won't fashion as God wishes it to do, and so have stopped trying, washed our hands of it? Are we as eager in our Christian work as we were at the start, when we turned to it so expectantly? Or—Oh it had no doubt better be put through, but little will come of it! Are we as hopeful of acquiring Christlikeness in our own life and character? Or do we leave the biggest of the promises lying unappropriated, not surprised by their not working out in our own individual experiences, for evidently we are not the stuff out of which saints are made, and even God cannot fairly be expected to make much of us? Has life beaten us? Is all vivid hope out? Or are we still as sure of it as ever; will we die, believing?

It is madness to do otherwise, for, says this writer, long although it has been delayed, it is all true, all really true! Believe me, he cries—and it is the most audacious thing even in the New Testament—if it were not true, God couldn't face you, could not meet your eyes, would be ashamed to link His name with those of such intrepid daring glorious creatures. For your hopes would be bigger than His realities, and your dreams nobler than His facts, and your longings loftier than He can manage to work out for you. But it is not so. He is not ashamed to be called their God, because it is all true. No dream once dreamed but in the end it works out into actuality. No most impossible vision but really comes true at last. Have you ever stood in the graveyard at the Tower of London, the dust of which is fashioned out of the hottest and most chivalrous hearts of England—the men who dared for us, toiled for us, lived for us, died for us—and it all came to nothing! But the torch they kindled was passed down the centuries, and others dared and toiled and lived and died; and they too were blotted out. But others rose, and others, and yet others; and at last it all came true, and to-day you and I are free only because they dreamed a hopeless dream, attempted what had been proved, times innumerable, to be entirely impossible.

Or think of Christ declaring that if He be hustled to a gallows He will draw the whole world to Him. Was there ever a more absurd saying uttered by human lips—one more unlikely, one more palpably untrue? And yet as often as you come within sight of the Cross on Calvary, do you not feel that pull, that compulsion, that attraction that you can't resist? And are you not His man, until the road bends out of sight of it again, and in a little while you forget about it all?

It is all true. It is the dreams that are realities, it is the visionaries who have their feet planted upon solid ground, it is the things that are obviously impossible that get done! Up again, up again: for He hath prepared a city for you, as He did for these homeless wanderers. To-day your character is a wild border country, filled too often with the sudden inrush of marauding passions, that leave only the red of blood, and black of smoke, and the tumbled ruins of your hopes and plans and long endeavours—and this, time on time, till it seems useless to try any longer. But one day you will live, behind strong walls and gates that cannot be forced, a rich and splendid life, beyond the reach of danger, and in full security. Let us hold to our visions even if we have to die believing in what we never actually saw. But surely it is not so. Still only that monotonous expanse of sea and sky and vacancy? But—is not that a land bird? and that yonder, is it seaweed, or a branch drifting past? And far ahead there, where the surf is tumbling, is not that something that looks like land at last? Let us still dream our dreams. For, as Cromwell wrote once to his daughter, 'To be a seeker is to be

of the best sect next to a finder, and such shall every faithful, humble seeker be at the end. Happy seeker! happy finder!'[1]

Desire.

Heb. xi. 16.—'But now they desire a better country.'

DESIRE has great power to control men. Even a great earthly ambition—earthly as the soul that conceives and embraces it—will provoke a man to extraordinary endurance and self-denial. This is a matter familiar enough. Men will live laborious days for the sake of gaining power over their fellow-men; or toil with self-denying energy simply to become rich, and to have the sordid satisfaction of buying the service of others; or drag themselves through miry ways in the hope of securing the notice and gaining the commendation either of the wealthy or of the high in earthly place. 'Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.' And if the earthly has such commanding power, what must be the power of the heavenly? You see it in the lives of the saints from St. Paul onward, as

> They climbed the steep ascent of heaven,
> Through peril, toil and pain;

counting no hardship unendurable that brought them nearer to the fulfilment of their desire. And the keenness of their desire forced them ever and again to their knees, to pray for persevering and renouncing grace that would help them in their time of need. For what is prayer, at times, but the unutterable longing of the pilgrim heart towards God and the land of God's full dominion, the hunger for the day of our deliverance 'from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God'?

Archbishop Trench speaks of it in one memorable couplet, thus—

> The man is praying, who doth press with might
> Out of his darkness into God's own light.

It is that gleam of light from the land of God which, falling across our path, calls us ever on, and nullifies the attraction of the past.

> We must love the light so well
> That no darkness will seem fell.

Even as He who, in the strength of a great desire, won the greatest victory ever gained on earth, 'who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

When our anchor is up, and our ship of life has left the land-locked harbour for the open sea, we long, not for calm weather in which to drift at the mercy of every current, we long rather to feel the wind in our face; for, though it rise to a gale, threatening to drive us far out of our course, we shall bend it to our purpose and beat up in the very teeth of it, till we drop anchor in the haven of our desire. Once that haven has our heart, our life must reach it too. And it is such desire, strengthened by the presence aboard of the Pilot who has never lost on the high seas a single ship which was wholly committed to His charge, that will bring us safely through the heaviest weather.

Controlled by this desire, we may sign our names reverently to the apostolic confession, 'Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

It was the desire of the better that made these men heroes of faith. But all men have this desire for a better country. How is it, then, that it is the peculiar desire of those who are described to be of heroic faith? We shall find our answer by considering the nature of the true desire.

1. First, it is a *desire for that which is sovereign* in the country beyond. It is not simply a desire for rest, although that is right in its place. It is not merely a desire for happy friendship, though that is good and worthy. Nor is it a desire for enlarged powers. The true Christian's desire is for that which is sovereign in the better country, and that is character. In other words, it is for that holiness which is the character of God and is manifested in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the motto over the gate of that heavenly city: Within enters nothing 'that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.' It is the pure desire for a better country that should be the supreme motive in the Christian's heart. This desire is the diamond around which all lesser

[1] A. J. Gossip.

jewels must be in subjection. One man may desire knowledge. He may want it for practical uses, because by knowledge he may gain more for himself; or he may desire knowledge for its own sweet sake, as a means of developing and ennobling his character. He will then desire it, not for what it will bring, but for what it is in itself. So another may desire friendship, not for the influence it gives him over others, which may aid him to further his own ambition, but for its own sake. Thus the desire for that which is sovereign in heaven is a desire for that which is pure and immortal. It is a desire to be like God. The Buddhist has a desire for the extinction of his personal consciousness so that he may be for ever at rest in Nirvana. The Mohammedan desires to reach his ideal paradise. The business man desires success in his business enterprise. But the Christian's desire is for character; and he who desires that desires truly the better country.

2. Then this must be a *strong desire,* not a mere lazy, languid wish. Wishing is weakening; desire is strengthening. We have a gauge of that desire right at hand. A man may desire knowledge; but is he willing to work for it, to give himself to that earnest study necessary to acquire it? A man desires a good influence over others; is he willing to strive for it? We may wish in a lazy way for many good things, but the mere wishing will never bring them. To accomplish anything we must have a strong desire. The intensity of our desire is measured by an earnest striving, by vigorous working. The Christian shows the true desire to be like God by a living faith in His Son, and by thorough consecration to His service; by fervent prayer to God and by confidence in Christian friends. In these ways we are to work out our own salvation. By these means we are to fit ourselves for the better country. Do you desire to cross the ocean? You enter the steamship and commit yourself to the care of the captain. Do men desire wealth? How they work for it, giving the best years of their life to its accumulation! Or fame? How they strive to attain it! How earnestly men will work for any worldly good! Now, are you willing to work to enter that better country where character is the supreme good? Are you ready to strive ardently for this? Have you a great and strong desire, a steady and energetic reaching forward of the soul for a character that is ever true and pure?

3. Again, this must be an *unselfish desire,* a desire which seeks to benefit others as well as self. Every mean desire is selfish, and every high desire is unselfish. A man who desires political power seeks to put others out of his way. An ambitious man tries to over-reach those about him. But a man with a true desire for knowledge ever seeks to enable others to gain this knowledge with him; and so, if he desires a noble character in himself, he desires others to have the same character. The same is true of the desire for the character of the better country: it is an unselfish desire. If a man simply wishes to go himself to this better country, he has not the true desire. He must seek to help others there. Right here is the origin of all missionary work. It is a desire that the world may enter the heavenly country and have a right to the tree of life. This is the desire for a better country that God approves. This is the desire Christ had, who tried to lift men to the highest and best life. A desire for this true character will always be accompanied by a desire that all others may rejoice in the same noble character.

This is the desire that discriminates character. It is first pure, then mighty, then unselfish. This is like the character of God, seeking to enrich and ennoble man; for every promise of God is as a jewel flung over the battlements of paradise to find a lodgment in the world.

Children, all Christians here on earth,
Where'er their weary footsteps roam,
Whate'er their place, or state, or birth,
Are pilgrims going home.

The world shall tempt with vain delight,
Shall try them with contempt and scorn,
They must not think her flowers too bright,
Nor tremble at her thorn.

If doing right seem hard and stern,
They must not shrink and turn away,
But take their Master's Cross, and learn
To bear it, day by day.

Thus praising God for all things sweet
And bright, that He on earth has given,
With watchful prayer their pilgrim feet
Must hasten on to Heaven.[1]

[1] C. F. Alexander.

Patriotism.

Heb. xi. 14.—'They seek a country.'

PATRIOTISM—the word suggested by the Greek term employed in this verse—patriotism, the love of the land in which we are born, the pride in it, the desire for it whenever we are absent, is among the noblest of human affections. It has often been observed that a man who is incapable of it is incapable of all noble emotion. There are some who think that they have merged patriotism in a higher affection, which they call cosmopolitanism; but these people either love their own country best, or else in their exchange of patriotism for cosmopolitanism they have lost a great deal more than they have gained.

But it must be confessed that to a large extent what has come to be called patriotism is no longer concern for one's country's welfare so much as fear of some other country's progress; it is not love of one's neighbours so much as hatred of one's enemies. It leads to delusive judgments which drive nations to madness and destruction. Within the atmosphere it creates, truth is suffocated and comes to be regarded as a species of treason; and as it invites nation after nation to indulge in the same intoxication, so it dooms the world to a cycle of gigantic wars which must, at last, leave this habitable planet a globe of blood and fire wandering in the heavens a cosmic tragedy, the star that committed suicide.

It is no wonder that one of the greatest minds of the nineteenth century came to regard patriotism as the most dangerous delusion of mankind. And when one sees the type of person who passes for a lover of his country to-day, merely because he surpasses others in the oratory of hate, one discovers how true Johnson's blustering dictum can be: 'Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.'

Yet patriotism is not a delusion, but a Divine inspiration.

1. It is how God trains the nations. Nationality, that elusive quality, demands at least two constituents: a definite impression of character made upon outsiders, and a clear consciousness of distinction from others felt by a people themselves; and it is evidently the wise economy of God that within the boundaries that are set them nations should specialize their genius, develop distinctive gifts, and grow aware of something peculiar in God's concern for them.

Israel's sense of vocation is simply a special and acute consciousness of what every nation feels. And there is nothing that was either national delusion or Divine favouritism in this election. The greatest gift of God could not be given without specialization, without one nation being trained to bring forth the Saviour of the world. What was perverted in this was the pride and exclusivism which disfigured Israel's self-consciousness, and which had to be crushed out of her through centuries of suffering.

But we can dimly see that in their degree all the nations have had some particular part to play, have been called upon to bring some gift to perfection, in order that they might the better take their part in the human family, and the better impart that gift to the whole world. We can see how Greece was called to perfect the idea of beauty, and Rome that of order. We are just beginning to discern what the gift of the East is for the world. We may dream of what Russia, of what America is going to give. There is not one of the combatants in the World War which had not something to give; and if they had understood how to give, it would have made such a war impossible.

2. But this patriotism is safe only as its basis is understood. It must be recognized as an essentially spiritual thing. No patriotism is worth the name that cannot be described by the words of our text: 'they seek a better country.' It is not what nations are, but what they may become, that is to be their inspiration. And it ought to be recognized with ease that the things on which they pride themselves are ideals rather than actualities. It is ideals which keep a nation alive; and when its ideals are exhausted it dies. It is the constant spurring of the nation to live up to its ideals and the constant search for still higher ideals which is the true patriotism.

It must be recognized that these ideals are a Divine inspiration. Although they are fashioned by the circumstances of a nation, that is not their ultimate explanation; they are given to nations by God. We must have it firmly fixed in our minds that there is a heavenly country, there is an ideal

world already existing in God. We are not labouring for some unknown end; we are not simply working out some blind impulse of the life-force. We are not simply an accident of existence struggling to find our way as best we can to some stable condition, then vanishing as mysteriously as we came. All these secular notions have their inevitable result either in a dreary pessimism, such as the East is tempted to sink into, or in that worship of material might which is the great temptation of the West. As St. Paul says in one of his most glorious bits of insight, 'we are a colony of heaven'; we are here to bring the heavenly reality, already existing and therefore already possible, to earth.

The national sense of God must be carefully cultivated. There were many things in the Jews' conception both of God and of His calling which were wrong and had to be battered out of them by national disaster. But it was these things that gave them power to endure. It seems to be thought that, since a national consciousness of God so often leads to folly and exclusiveness, it would be best to abandon it and have a purely secular patriotism. But there is nothing to correct a secular patriotism by reference to anything beyond itself, while even a deluded conception of God and a nation's calling does contain within itself the promise of correction. What we have to dread beyond all things to-day is a secular patriotism; it spells everywhere disaster for nations and destruction for humanity.

Must we be welded by the might of kings
In one hard mould to make us strong and great?
Or can we do ourselves the heroic things
That crown with power the city and the state?
In peace as well as war canst thou give all—
Comfort and home, the love in woman's eyes,
High hopes and riches, if thy country call—
Ready and eager for the sacrifice?
Not only when the bugle sounds, but *now*,
Forget thy self? Silence thy mutinous soul!
Tho' thorns of martyrdom may press thy brow,
Fail not! for human welfare is the goal!
The state shall stand, tho' thou thyself must fall,
Or live for freedom's sake, bereft of all! [1]

[1] W. D. Foulke, *Lyrics of War and Peace*, 81.

A Better Country.

Heb. xi. 16.—'They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.'

'When I lived in Liverpool,' says Dr. W. M. Taylor, 'I saw few more suggestive sights than the departure from the Mersey of an emigrant vessel, freighted with those who in the providence of God were to become the pioneer settlers of some far-off land. From various countries had these voyagers come, and they were not there without long previous deliberation and many regrets; yet such had been the pressure of poverty in their homes, or the influence of political grievance, real or imaginary, upon their hearts, that they had at length resolved to leave behind them the graves of their ancestors and seek some sunnier spot where happiness and prosperity might attend their toil. Different exceedingly their experiences in the past might have been, and strangely diverse also in all probability would be their histories in the future; but as they stood on the crowded deck just then one hope was before them all, and if we had asked them what they were doing there, or why, having left behind their fatherland, with all its associations of song and love and patriotism and religion, they were about to brave the perils of the trackless ocean, they would with one voice have made reply: "We desire a better country." Now, what these emigrants were as they passed through Liverpool, that were the patriarchs in the land of promise, and that is the Christian in the present world.'

In what sense is heaven a better country?

1. Heaven will be *the clearing up of life's mysteries*. Ah! how full life is of mysteries! How much there is that we can never understand! What a big, ugly problem our life sometimes is! You wonder again and again what it all means; where it is going to end; whether there is any real purpose running through it; whether Providence is there at all. But in heaven the full light will shine. We shall get the unravelling of our riddles. We shall know why things were allowed to happen which seemed so cruel, so unjust. We shall be able perfectly to trace the Divine Hand, weaving good out of the chequered circumstances of our life. We shall realize all that sorrow, disillu-

sionment, the trial of our faith and patience has done for us. We do see it a little here in our moments of insight. We shall know the whole story then.

¶ Do you remember that touching scene connected with the last hours of the great Schiller? It always moves me as I read it. Let me give you Carlyle's words: 'Feeling that his end was near, he addressed himself to meet it as became him. Of his friends and family he took a touching but a tranquil farewell, and ordered that his funeral should be private and without pomp or parade. Someone inquiring how he felt, he said, "Calmer and calmer." About six o'clock he sank into a deep sleep. Once for a moment he looked up with a lively air and said, "Many things were growing plain and clear to him"; then he closed his eyes and sleep deepened into death.' Many things were growing plain and clear! Ah! that is what it means: in heaven we shall *know*, and 'when I awake up in thy image, I shall be satisfied with it.'[1]

2. Again, heaven will be *the assignment of opportunity*. Each one of us will be given the opportunity to be and to do the thing which he was created to be and to do. 'The business of life,' it has been said, 'is to develop your faculty.' But there are people who seem never to be able to discover what their faculties are. And there are others who, if they think they have discovered them, have no opportunity to cultivate them, or to use them if cultivated. One of the most perplexing spectacles in life is that of people with abilities who might do great things with their lives, but for whom the door never opens; people chained to uncongenial duties which never seem to call out their real powers.

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
> The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Circumstances have ordained it so. And such people have to plod on in the stale round of daily duty, just doing what fate seems to have thrown in their way.

Well, heaven means the readjustment of all this. 'Heaven,' it has been said, 'was made for those who fail on earth.' In heaven each of us will find himself in the place for which he is fitted. In heaven each will find scope for his special talent. In heaven we shall do the work for which we are best suited, and therefore the work in which we find the greatest happiness.

To do a thing well you must love doing it; it is congenial work that we all do best. And it is congenial because we were meant to do it. People make a great mistake when they argue that because you dislike a thing, therefore it is a sign that you ought to do it. It by no means follows. As Ruskin has again and again taught us in those illuminating pages of his on architecture and ancient art, what our forefathers wrought is so noble and beautiful and rich in highest meaning just because their heart was in it, because they loved it, because it was the living expression of what they felt and aspired to. So the stones of Venice, the pictures of Florence, Rome and Milan, the cathedrals and churches of ancient France, speak to us, not of a task painfully and grudgingly performed, but of a sweet labour of love; of man finding his highest happiness, his fullest, richest life, in the employment of those gifts of genius with which a beneficent Creator had endowed him.

3. And not only does heaven mean opportunity; it means the carrying over and *continuing of all that was most real, most spiritual* in our work and interests here. Things do not stop at the grave. They run on by connections, sure, however unknown, into what shall be.

> If such his soul's capacities,
> Even while he trod the earth—think, now,
> What pomp on Buonarroti's brow,
> With its new palace-brain where dwells
> Superb the soul, unvexed by cells
> That crumbled with the transient clay!
> What visions will his right hand's sway
> Still turn to form, as still they burst
> Upon him?

Your faculties, your interests do not die with your body. You carry them with you into heaven, and there you find them enlarged, transfigured. Michael Angelo and Beethoven shall still find in heaven their occupations; and so shall you. This gives to the thought of heaven a reality; but it gives also a new worth to our present life.

[1] D. W. Whincup, *The Training of Life*, 71.

4. And lastly, heaven means *the end of sorrow*—'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.' 'Neither there shall be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.'

Thank God that religion is, after all, so beautifully human that it takes into account one of the strongest feelings in our nature! What touches us like sorrow, the death of those we love, the agony of pain and sickness? How everything seems to vanish as you stand face to face with a crushing sorrow! Most of you have felt it; the rolling away of everything except the blow that stunned you. Well, that won't happen again in heaven. 'There shall be no more sea'; no more separation from those you love. That is one of the last truths your Bible tells you; and it tells it you with all the impressiveness of last words. The thought of heaven would be incomplete without this. With it we know that heaven will be all that our hearts can ever long for.

You know that tender and pathetic Scottish phrase, 'The Land o' the Leal.' What does the word 'leal' mean? It is another form of *legal* and *loyal*. In middle English—that is, the English of several centuries ago—and still to this day in the speech of Scotsmen, it signifies 'true-hearted' or 'faithful.' 'The Land o' the Leal' means the country which is the abode of the true-hearted.

What country is that? Because the phrase is Scottish, there are always some people who make the mistake of supposing that the small country which is known by the name of Scotland is 'the Land o' the Leal.' It is not Scotland that is 'the Land o' the Leal,' but *heaven*, the Paradise of God, and the home of the blessed after death.

More than a hundred years ago a gifted Scottish poetess, who even yet is scarcely so well known as she ought to be, wrote an exquisitely lovely Scottish song that bears this sweet and musical title, Robert Burns has sometimes been credited with the authorship of it, but the real author was Caroline Oliphant, afterwards the Baroness Nairne.

Here is her immortal poem in the form in which she seems to have written it at first; that is, leaving out one double verse which she put into it afterwards:—

I'm wearin' awa', John,
Like snaw-wreaths in thaw, John,
I'm wearin' awa'
To the land o' the leal.
There's nae sorrow there, John;
There's neither cauld nor care, John,
The day is aye fair
In the land o' the leal.

Our bonnie bairn's there, John,
She was baith gude and fair, John,
And, oh! we grudged her sair
To the land o' the leal.
But sorrow's sel' wears past, John,
And joy's a-coming fast, John,
The joy that's aye to last
In the land o' the leal.

Oh! haud ye leal and true, John,
Your day it's wearin' through, John,
And I'll welcome you
To the land o' the leal.
Now, fare-ye-weel, my ain John,
This warld's cares are vain, John,
We'll meet, and we'll be fain,
In the land o' the leal.

It is natural for the dying saint who has suffered much and long to yearn after that 'sweet and blessed country that eager hearts expect.' It is reasonable also for Christians who are not dying, in certain moods of mind, to do the same, as, for example, when they are oppressed with trials and sorrows, or even, like Bernard of Cluny, with the vice and wickedness of the world. John Bunyan tells us regarding his Pilgrim that sometimes 'his heart waxed warm about the place whither he was going.' The Apostle Paul had hours now and again in which he desired to depart and be with Christ, which he thought to be far better. The godly Samuel Rutherford, who was said to be always studying, always preaching, and always visiting the sick, found time to feed on anticipations of Paradise. He tells us that he often longed to 'stand at the outer side of the gates of the New Jerusalem, and look through a crevice of the door, and see Christ's face.' Sometimes also one longs to rejoin those who have gone before us to the heavenly country. Alexander Peden, as he sat by the grave of Richard Cameron, 'the Lion of the Covenant,' at Airsmoss, sighed and exclaimed, 'Oh, to be wi' Ritchie!' That will indeed be a bright summer morning upon which we

shall see the smiling angel faces which we have loved long since and lost awhile.[1]

The Recognition of Faith.

Heb. xi. 16.—'God is not ashamed to be called their God.

THERE is nothing in our nature of which men judge so differently as faith. Kindness, courage, justice—these are never in question; but how many there are, shrewd and not irreligious people, who set the homeliest virtues far above faith. In their judgment of a man, they take account of his fidelity to engagements, his friendliness, his veracity, his philanthropy. It is by such qualities as these that he takes rank in their esteem, and unconsciously they let themselves imagine that for God it must be the same. Our friend, they would say, had, no doubt, a religious life of his own; but, in any case, he had the essentials, for he was an honest, kindly, good-living man. Now that is a judgment in which faith has almost reached the vanishing point. In times of awakened feeling, men have realized all that faith means for God. St. Paul gave it its place and showed that forgiveness, and holiness, and all the blessings of the new order are bound up with it. It is the 'file-leading grace.' But St. Paul has never held the heart of the Church for long, and whenever it loses fervour it ceases to understand him and turns to less noble teachers. Luther proclaimed anew that the just shall live, not by his justice, but by faith; and for a season, through the tumult of the Reformation, that blazed before men's eyes like a guiding beacon. But in many Churches, unimpeachably orthodox in their doctrinal profession, faith itself has no high place either in the preaching of the ministers or in the instinct of the people. When men are deeply stirred, they think of it; but a change of mood brings on a change of mind, and faith falls into obscurity again.

1. What essentially is this high thing? It is 'that which gives substance to things hoped for,' so that they can no longer be treated as unsubstantial and remote. It is 'that which tests and proves the things unseen,' so that the power of them is actually felt in a man's life. In Abraham's mind, if we conceive the situation as it must have been, there arose thoughts of God different from those which prevailed in his nation, and, after a time, the working of the new ideas drove him out, he knew not whither. To keep him where he was were such substantial things as custom, and tribal loyalty, and reverence for authority. Was it likely that everyone before him had been wrong? and what reason could he give for his altered thoughts? No one shared them with him, but that did not take from out his heart the persuasion that they were true. What to most men is the least substantial of things—an inner conviction of truth—was powerful enough to separate him from friends, and country, and family tradition, and to lead him on, he knew not whither.

To-day that ancient experience is renewed. A man awakens to some truth in which his neighbours have no interest, but his heart makes answer, and he begins to alter his life in accordance with it. What power or substance is there in a mere idea, shining remotely like a star? Even if God is such, what is it to you? and how can you prove Him to be such? But faith gives substance to things hoped for. Not only is a man moved by the sight of Christ (for that is common, and many are thrilled with admiration and desire who never come to see His face), through his faith he is actually constrained by Christ. He says to his friends, 'You are all against me and cannot understand my mood. You say that Christ's death is an old story, and you have no tears for it to-day. You believe that God will not judge a man harshly who does his best; and as you have eyes and a heart as well as I, you see no reason for such emotion. I know all that. But so far as my feeling and my apprehension are concerned these things are not remote. It is as if the Crucified had come to me, as once He did to Thomas, and, showing me His wounds, had called me after Him; and I must go. The long centuries contract, the depths of space diminish, and leave me, not a world's distance from Him, but face to face; and I must go. He bids me who has died for me.'

Thou art the very life which beats within my heart:
I have no power to choose—from Thee I *cannot* part!

O Light of all the world, that gladden'd weary eyes!
Didst Thou to darkness sink, never again to rise?

[1] C. Jerdan, *Manna for Young Pilgrims*, 389.

O Voice, more sweet than men had known on earth before!
Has Thy strange music died to silence evermore?

O Death, through which we dream'd of gain in utter loss!
Was it indeed defeat, that passion of the Cross?

Then—Brother, Master, King!—I take my part with Thee!
And where Thou art, O Lord, there let thy servant be! [1]

That is how faith works, giving reality to things which seem most remote. A man, catching sight of some noble imagination of duty, lays it on himself as a burden which must immediately be accepted. His neighbours reason with him, and point to what is customary and practicable. His minister from the pulpit argues that the Apostles did not make war on slavery, but were content to endure such abuses until Christ should come. What has he to set against that? Simply this, that something in him is crying after that far-off radiance, asserting kinship with it. Judging no one else, he feels that for him duty lies that way, and he *must* follow. Like Abraham, he may die before he has reached any goal, but that does not alter his conviction that God means him to start upon the road. Every man of faith has difficulties of that kind to face. Friends question the justice of his instinct; near things assert themselves as the proper objects of his seeking; mists come down and obscure the brightness of his vision. His views make little way, and he does scant justice to the beliefs he holds, for he is distracted and bewildered often. And yet, however weak and perplexed his faith may be, it returns to its object, for he knows whom he has believed.

2. Now this vision of faith is not an unsubstantial splendour, with which God mocks His creatures. It is the far-away image of things which gain in clearness as we come nearer to them, and of which the best is yet to be. He has prepared a city, says this author, a solid order of fact answering to all our trust and hope. A man submits to discipline and delay, walking with God by faith; but if God is true, there is a process of the fruits of discipline corresponding to the discipline itself. Gains in character and in comfort are in His hand to balance all the pains and hindrances. There is nothing wanton in His dealing with men, but every loss or disappointment aims at larger good. When He takes away, it is because He means to give; when He delays, it is because we are not ready; when He disappoints, it is to recall us to the proper ends of life. There is very much to perplex us now, but God will be able at the last to answer us for all we have endured. The discipline and the fruit of discipline hold their way together throughout a man's career; and God, knowing the things in reserve, hidden in His own hand, is not ashamed at the voice of our trust.

It is an impressive thing to watch the life of a man in whom hope and fact have thus kept pace. He has had much to bear of sorrow and cross like his fellows; and he has had his share of love, and gladness, and success. And as he has grown old, believing, there has been a continual enriching of his life out of God's city of satisfactions. Through love of wife and child his heart has grown big and gentle; through the sight of men's troubles and the soreness of his own, he has learned the grace of helpful sympathy; in frequent disappointment and by experience of men's ingratitude, he has learned to hope soberly and to keep himself in hand. His powers may now be failing, but they have served to bring into his life things which can never fail. The things which perish in the using, the quickness of sense, and the strength of muscle, these are departing; but the things which do not perish are preserved. Will God be ashamed to meet such a servant at the last, in whom all things have worked for good?

He is willing to be judged by His people, not in haste and petulance, of course, for it is only patience which has the right to judge God. Our reckless accusations have been shamed and silenced many a time, when we came to see what He intended. Our complaints because of the lack of comfort and of guidance are never of long life. We need to tarry for the Lord's leisure; but already He might challenge a reply from some of us, reminding us of gifts and aids which we have had from Him. Has He not kept His word? Surely, if we have brought sincerity to our religion, we have by this time learned that it is an order

[1] *Notes and Queries*, Dec. 31, 1881.

of real helps in duty, and guidance in perplexity, and victory over self—not of cloud castles and fair words. And so we move on, if we are trusting God, towards that day when the unsubstantial and the transient shall be done away, and we shall know as we are known. Blessed are they that keep His commandments, it is said, that they may enter in through the gates into the city! Blessed are they that have home-sickness, for they shall come home! That is the reward of our faith, and it proves how well that faith was founded.

If the way be drear,
If the foe be near,
Let not faithless fears o'ertake us,
Let not faith and hope forsake us,
For, through many a foe,
To our home we go.

Joseph's Faith.

Heb. xi. 22.—'By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.'

On the opposite side of the valley near Nablous, about six hundred yards north of Jacob's Well, and near the little modern village of Askar, supposed to be the Biblical Sychar, the traditional tomb of Joseph is pointed out to every visitor. It stands in the midst of very rugged ground, where the south-west corner of Mount Ebal slopes down to the plains. Like all Moslem tombs, it is a simple raised mound of stones about three feet high, rudely plastered all over, and placed in the middle of a square, roofless chapel or enclosure with white-washed walls. There is beside it a row of olives and fig-trees, which soften by their shadows the asperity of the spot; and a vine which has crept up the north-east angle of the court and hung its luxuriant foliage over the wall reminds one irresistibly of the beautiful comparison of Joseph, by his dying father, to a fruitful bough whose branches hang over the wall. The tomb is the object of reverence to all the religious communities of Palestine; and this common veneration—each sect regarding it as its own property—has prevented it from being disfigured by mosque or temple or church, and has preserved it in its primitive simplicity. Like the tomb of Rachel near Bethlehem, the walls of the enclosure and the sides of the tomb itself are covered with numerous modern Hebrew inscriptions and Moslem names, written or scratched on the plaster. And on a stone bench, built into one of the walls, you will see at almost any hour of the day two or three Jews seated, Bible in hand, swaying themselves backwards and forwards as they chant a prayer appropriate to the place.

¶ From Jacob's Well I gazed across upon the spot, irradiated by the slanting rays of the afternoon sun. There was a deep thrill at my heart, as I tried to recall the well-known events in the life of one who, had he chosen, might have been buried on the green banks of the Nile, beside the great Pyramids of Egypt, instead of in this quiet obscure spot among the Canaanite hills.

But it is not the romantic history of Joseph's wonderful rise, from the condition of a prisoner and a slave, to be the greatest potentate in Egypt, next to Pharoah himself, that impresses you most as you gaze at the lonely tomb, but the thought of his unswerving devotion to the pure religion of his fathers, of his unflinching trust in the Covenant promises of the God of Israel. That humble cenotaph seems to you one of the grandest monuments of faith in the world. Like the cave of Machpelah under the mosque at Hebron, in which Joseph's fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, lie, it remains to our day a witness to the truth of Bible history.

In the great golden chapter of the text, in which the writer calls up the noblest names of Hebrew history to strengthen the attachment of his Jewish brethren to the Christian faith which they had embraced, he conclusively proves to them that the link which connects all those names in different ages and circumstances is the faith which they exhibited. This was their chief personal distinction and their common characteristic. It was their faith that gave a unity to the whole of their national history, and joined together the saints of the old with the saints of the new dispensation. It was not the mode of their religious worship, which might vary with their circumstances and with their advancement and enlightenment, but their firm and steadfast trust in God, that made them one. And in order to encourage the Jewish Christians to hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering, and not to cast away their confidence, but wait patiently for the

fulfilment of the Divine promise, he brings before them, among many other examples of men who clung to their hope in the most desperate circumstances, the example of Joseph, who, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones. [1]

1. The request of Joseph concerning his bones wears, to some of us, an aspect of concern for himself, but really it is only an additional and emphatic witness to the patriotic quality of his faith and the quenchlessness of his hope. The ruling passion, 'love of his brethren,' is strong in death. But it is clear that it is not the resurrection of his embalmed body to share the life of Israel in the future that inspires his farewell words, but his eagerness to feed the faith and hope of his brethren in the sure leadership of God. True seer that he is, their future fills his vision and their needs quicken his patriotism. He was, and always had been, a true son of Jacob and Isaac and Abraham, and a sincere brother of Reuben and Judah. In Egypt he was an exile, and never forgot his father's house. Not his Egyptian name, not even his Egyptian wife, still less his Egyptian greatness and glory, had alienated his heart. As the faith of Moses incarnated itself in uncomplaining endurance for forty years of the severest spiritual discipline, and that of Abraham took the form of a splendid venture into a trackless desert at the bidding of the God who had chosen him, so the faith of the patriarch Joseph clad itself in the self-suppressing, pure, and far-seeing patriotism of his farewell appeals and aspirations. Thus, 'by faith,' Joseph built the city of God in a day of impending trial and prolonged and acute suffering.

2. But his request makes clear that his 'faith' rested on the solid basis that human life is a Divine order; that his own life had been moulded and formed by God, the Watcher and Ruler of mankind, who had given him his education and his place in the administration of the affairs of Egypt and the world. Joseph saw that truth early, and rarely, if ever, lost sight of it. It shines like a brilliant star in the darkest night of his life. It is the thread of gold woven into the web of his character. It keeps him, when he comes into contact with the corruptions of courts, from yielding to their temptations. It sustains him in the sharp contrasts and swift vicissitudes of his lonely life, so that he bears himself with steadfast soul and unbroken calm. It is the burden of his message to his brothers when, conscience-smitten and awe-filled, they listen to Egypt's viceroy, knowing that he is their brother: 'Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . . God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance'; and a third time he repeats it, and with added strength, saying, 'So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.' It seemed altogether different. It looked as though *they,* and they alone, had done it, and that he owed to them all the trouble and suffering of his life—banishment from his home and father, slavery, and imprisonment. Their hard hands, and harder hearts, had, indeed, roughly hewed his path, but God was above all and through all, shaping his character, controlling his course and its issues, so that young Israel might have a refuge in the day of trouble, the finest existing school of civilization for its education, and the most effective preparation for its high destiny. That faith was his strength. He was the child of the promises. His life was a part of the Divine order that could not be broken.

3. Now this 'order' and that 'faith' have for their goal, their 'objective,' the future of Israel; the deliverance, guardianship, development, and service of the people of God's special choice. 'By faith' Joseph makes mention not of his 'bones' *first,* but of the 'departure' of the children of Israel from Egypt on their way to the new home and fatherland in Palestine. Real faith in God embraces a great future. It cannot be content with the narrow present, or shut up within the brief to-day. God is great and high and ever advancing, and fellowship with Him makes us partakers of His great aims, high ideals, and advancing energies. The great and universal men who change the face of the world, inspire and influence all hearts, embody ideals, and make nations are always 'seers.' Abraham sees 'the day of Christ.' It *must* come; because God is God, and God is the Redeemer. Moses spoke of

[1] Hugh Macmillan, in *The Divine Artist,* 197.

a prophet like himself, who would take up his work and push it nearer the goal of perfection. So Joseph saw the expanding family life of Israel —the growing God-led, God-visited people—and sang his swan-song of faith and hope.

The Choice of Moses.

Heb. xi. 24-26.—'By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.'

It is easy to read this passage, and even to have some dim appreciation of its statements, without entering fully into the marvel and meaning of the words. But if you carefully consider it, you will find that it presents to us one of the most extraordinary acts of deliberate renunciation of the worldly, and deliberate preference for the spiritual, which the world has ever known. It is equally wonderful, whether you look at the things which Moses sacrificed, or at the things which he preferred. The adopted of royalty, the dweller in a palace, the well-instructed student of Egyptian wisdom, luxury loading her board at his bidding, pleasure waiting for his presence at her revel, within his grasp the sceptre of the most ancient and wealthy monarchy in the globe—it was surely no light thing to renounce a heritage like this; and there must have been, to constrain his decision, motives of irresistible power. Your wonder will increase, if you remember for what he made the sacrifice. He chose 'rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.' His countrymen were broken-spirited and crouching slaves. They were neither wealthy nor noble, neither intelligent nor manly. They had been so long in bondage that they were hardly fit for freedom. They could not strike for liberty; they could only lament their lot in the hopeless complainings of despair. With the spirit of bondsmen they strove against each other—the slave became a tyrant to his fellow-slave; and when Moses first entered upon his mission as their deliverer, they resented his interference, and turned from him sullenly and jealously. But in spite of their poverty and of their degeneracy, they attracted to themselves the affection of their brother of high degree; and he came down, without regret or faltering, that he might be their liberator from bondage, their lawgiver in the wilderness, and their leader into the fruition of the promised land.

It is said, moreover, that he esteemed 'the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.' He was influenced in his choice by the promise which God has given unto Israel, the promise of a Messiah. The Israelites, descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were heirs of the promise which had been given by God unto their fathers; and they held it as a belief, talked about it in familiar conversation, interwove it in their acts of worship, rejoiced in it as a hope immortal. Long years would elapse, they knew, before the advent of Shiloh; numerous fluctuations would agitate their political existence; the fulfilment of the promise would be long deferred; prophets and kings would yearn to see the day of the Anointed One, but would die without the sight; and yet the grand expectation was cherished through all varieties of circumstances—at once a reliance shrined in the heart, and a motive mighty in the life. One can easily imagine how the Egyptians, that race of proud idolaters, would regard the existence of such a hope with incredulous and scoffing wonder; and that anyone could be found to barter a high position and glittering prospects for a dream so uncertain would be an event that hardly anything could enable them to realize. And yet such was the influence of this promise, and the preciousness of this wealthy hope, that Egypt's gold lost its power to allure, and the treasures of Rameses and Succoth were trash in comparison. It is worthy of remark, also, that this choice was made 'when he was come to years.' It was not a romantic eccentricity of youth, whose heedlessness knew not the inheritance it hasted to forgo. It was not a remorseful resolution of the sated worldling, revenging himself upon the world which had cheated him of hope and happiness. It was not a momentary petulance of enfeebled age, when time had dulled the brain and blunted the sensibility of enjoyment. 'When he was come to years,'—in the vigour of his lofty intellect, with his hopes bright and his passions high; when there flushed upon him, through the radiant perspective,

visions of beauty and of power—then, with the crown of his manliness upon him, he chose 'rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.'

1. What, then, is the dominating note in Moses' great act? How shall we name it briefly? In a word, it is *renunciation*. It is the casting away of that which is full of charm and sweetness, the adoption of a neglected and despised cause. Now we are ready, all of us, to admire this spirit at a distance—as we do certain musical instruments—but, admiration apart, is there any temper more notably lacking in modern life? Were men ever so unwilling to bear obloquy and trouble for Christ's sake, or to show the reforming mind that takes up patiently the rough, toilsome yoke? Are the young men of our time, for example, what you would describe as strong in renunciation? Do they incline to give up ease or money for the highest things? Do they at all believe in giving up? Is not the modern ideal, in the familiar phrase, that of having a good time? In a Scottish city, the other day, a minister was heard to say that in his congregation deacons were resigning office; and the reason? Because they felt themselves unworthy? Because they were too busy? Not in the least; but in order that they might be free to spend their week-ends at a hydropathic. If we are to speak frankly, what a multitude of our young men need, if they are to have in them the bone and sinew of tested character, is to adopt some noble but downtrodden cause, and be its champions steadfastly through good report and evil. Why, for example, are so few of our younger men advocates of temperance reform? Not because the question is unimportant. Nor yet because they are in theory unconvinced of the necessity of amelioration. It is because temperance work has about it no glamour or romance; it is despised, or at best ignored, by the general opinion of the world. So we choose to be comfortable rather than to be obedient: we shrink from obloquy; and shame be on us for it. It is not thus that life was ennobled in the past, or filled with hope for those that followed after. It is not thus that Christ's name is glorified to-day, or the world in its travail redeemed from sin and wrong.

¶ There is nothing more encouraging than the fact that some of the best of our scholars have been our most ardent reformers. One recalls Dr. James Denney, Dr. W. P. Paterson, Dr. James Moulton. Of the last it is said: 'He was always ready to speak on temperance platforms when he could snatch time to do so, and he was an active member of the great temperance societies. When a crusade was inaugurated against the proposal to choose a brewer as Lord Mayor of Manchester he was in the thick of the fight at once. He had no tolerance whatever for the liquor trade, because it had no compassion for the sorrows of mankind, and it seemed to him to be an intolerable affront to the community that an active participant in that heartless and anti-social trade should be elevated to the position of Manchester's chief citizen. He brought in no personalities and suggested no personal unworthiness on the part of the proposed Lord Mayor, but he maintained that his trade disqualified him for such an office, and that no one who was involved in such a trade could adequately and impartially deal as chief magistrate with crime so largely the result of that baneful trade. Of course they were beaten. Such efforts seldom succeed, for the forces against them are enormously powerful; but they bore their witness, they cleared their conscience, and they sowed their seed.'[1]

2. But the underlying motive was *faith*. And here the first words of our text reach over and join hands firmly with the last: 'By faith Moses . . . had respect unto the recompence of the reward.' 'The reward'—someone will say; why then, after all, Moses was not wholly disinterested. Even his eye was fixed and bent upon the coming profit. It is as we said; unselfish religion is a dream. But stay one moment. His eye was bent upon the future; that, of course, is part simply of what is meant by faith. But that very future, how must it appear? Could it promise anything to tempt ambition or gratify mere self? Nothing, as we have seen, nothing but labour, grief and disappointment, and at last a friendless grave. Yet none the less there was a great reward, a recompence past all computation. Look deeper,

[1] *James Hope Moulton*, by his brother, 101.

and it becomes plain that inwardly he was ever more and more possessed, inhabited by God; and for him that was enough. Yes! though in the end every human face withdrew, and not a hand was left to close his eyes, for this man it was enough that he had God and that God had him.

No basis exists save this for a strong and fearless life. To possess God—it is the one thing needful. We may not be able to keep step for step with Moses in his heroism, but we can imitate his courageous faith; for the weakest of us may overcome the world, and smile at all its threats, if only we have joined ourselves to God in Christ with the grappling-irons of faith and trust. Make this supreme choice well, and all others, when they come, will decide themselves. Keep the vision of faith clear; go often up into the mountains to behold the far-shining peaks of the Promised Land; and the penalties of nonconformity to the world's rules will not seem of much account. Look up to Him you love and have your heart at peace in heaven; and when from time to time sacrifice and renunciation are asked of you, and you in turn stand at the parting of the ways, then the power of Him in whom you trust will pass into your weakness, making you strong, and you also will have your place in the great succession of the saints of God.

In the Biography of Margaret Lonsdale (Sister Dora) we read: She was travelling, as usual, third-class—because, as she affirmed, she preferred the company—when a number of half-drunken navvies got in after her, and before she could change her carriage the train was in motion. She recollected that her dress, a black gown and cloak, with a quiet black bonnet and veil, would probably, as on former encounters with half-intoxicated men, protect her from insult. Her fellow-travellers began to talk, and at last one of them swore several blasphemous oaths. Sister Dora's whole soul burnt within her, and she thought, 'Shall I sit and hear this?' But then came reflection, 'What will they do to me if I interfere?' and this dread kept her quiet a moment or two longer. But the language became more and more violent, and it passed through her mind, 'What must these men think of any woman who can sit by and hear such words unmoved; but, above all, what will they think of a woman in my dress who is afraid to speak to them?'

At once she stood up her full height in the carriage, and called out loudly, 'I will not hear the Master whom I serve spoken of in this way.' Immediately they dragged her down into her seat, with a torrent of oaths, and one of the most violent roared, 'Hold your jaw, you fool; do you want your face smashed in?' They held her down on the seat between them; nor did she attempt to struggle, satisfied with having made her open protest. At the next station they let her go, and she quickly got out of the carriage. A minute after, while she was standing on the platform, she heard a rough voice behind her. 'Shake hands, mum! you're a good-plucked one, you are! You were right and we were wrong.'[1]

Choosing and Refusing.

Heb. xi. 24, 25.—'By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.'

Dr. J. H. Jowett says: 'I never read this wonderful Epistle without feeling as though I were wandering about Westminster Abbey. There are little side-chapels where one is graciously subdued into reverence and quiet prayer. There are strangely beautiful lights, breaking unexpectedly from mystic windows, and filling the heart with heavenly cheer. Ever and anon one hears the sound of song and anthem; and by all manner of tokens one is kept in remembrance of the Cross of Christ. But when I reach chapter eleven of the Epistle I feel I have entered the nave of the glorious Abbey! It is a great and stately chapter, filled with memorials and monuments of the saints! I move about in the spacious temple, and I read the inscriptions upon these monuments which have been raised to commemorate the mighty dead. I stand before the memorials of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, of Sarah and Rahab, and a host of others, whose lives were many-coloured in their achievements, but who were one in the possession of a common faith in God. And here is the monument to Moses. What gives him a place in the Abbey? By what glorious deeds is he entitled to a corner in the nave? His life was characterised by a great refusal. It was also distinguished by a splendid

[1] *Sister Dora*, 62.

choice. And the refusal and the choice were both made in the power of a magnificent faith.' [1]

1. 'He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.' Then he refused leisure! He would not 'enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.' Then he refused pleasure! He esteemed as nothing 'the treasures of Egypt.' Then he refused treasure! Leisure: pleasure: treasure!—the three things most esteemed by men and pursued by them with voracious greed!

(1) He refused *leisure* if it meant moral benumbment. He would not have the luxurious ease of the King's court if the soft and woolly seclusion were to stop his ears to the cries and wails of the needy and oppressed. He would not have comforts which implied the destruction of sympathy. He refused the sumptuous indolence of the court lest it should make him insensitive to the pains and bondage of the Hebrew race. He despised ignoble leisure!

(2) And he would not have *pleasure* that was tainted with sin. The court would have offered him a life of loud sensations and sensationalisms. His senses would have been gratified to the point of choking. But he who dwells in the senses so easily becomes a sensualist. Our senses are intended to be passages and not living-rooms, and we do irreparable wrong to our beings when we dwell in physical gratification and neglect the quiet inner sanctuary of the spirit. Moses refused 'the pleasures of sin.'

(3) And he would not have *treasure* that was stained with oppression and blood. Moses could not have touched Egyptian treasure without hearing the wail of the slave who had made it. He could not have shut his eyes to the marks of the blood. He would not have wealth which was the product of iniquity. It would have defiled his hands and scorched his soul. He refused 'the treasures of Egypt' with the loathing of profound disgust.

2. He chose 'rather to suffer affliction with the people of God.' That is to say, he chose the side of weakness and oppression against the side of unscrupulous might. He chose the weak minority against the unjust and outrageous majority. He chose the unpopular, plus the right! It was a magnificent choice. It is always and everywhere the most glorious spectacle under God's heaven. Earth has no more heartening sight than the spectacle of a man putting off his slippers and putting on his heavy boots, and going out into a rough and tempestuous night that he may take up some cause of suffering weakness against the bold and majestic forces of wrong! In every age God has some men and women who despise all slippered ease, and who go out into the rough, dark roads at the cry of the perishing and the faint. They care not for any scars they may receive. There are some scars which may be worn as ornaments. They are 'the marks of the Lord Jesus.'

3. By what power was the patriarch inspired in his choice and renunciation? 'By faith.' 'He looked unto the recompence of the reward.' He believed in the ultimate vindication of the right. He braved everything on the splendid assumption that 'he always wins who sides with God.' He believed that small minorities, buttressed by the Almighty, would at length be revealed in the triumph of glory. God would 'bring forth righteousness as the light.' And 'he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.' He enjoyed mystic companionship. He had no sense of loneliness in the apparently lonely fight. The road was never long, for it was 'the highway of the Lord.' God was with him! That is ever the cry of the spiritually brave; and, possessed by that conviction, they can confront the steepest hill and face the fiercest foe in the strength of an inspiring and jubilant hope.

[1] J. H. Jowett, in *The Sunday Strand*, v. 253.

For a Season.

Heb. xi. 25.—'To enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.'

THE phrase 'for a season' is a single word in the Greek (*proskairos*). Three times this Greek adjective is used in the New Testament. The pleasures of sin 'for a season' (Heb. xi. 25). The good seed, which has not a sufficient grip of the earth, endures 'for a while' (Matt. xiii. 21). The things that are seen are 'temporal,' or, to borrow a parallel expression from the same passage, 'for a moment' (2 Cor. iv. 18). That which lingers for a season, and thrives for a while, and lasts for a moment—it is the sum-total of the possessions of many. But over against those short-

sighted souls are the wiser souls, who covet and claim that which abides and grows for ever and ever.

1. There is an enjoyment which is transitory. Sin has its pleasures. They are both genuine and generous. They have an appetizing flavour, a luscious sweetness, a seductive appeal. Whether the attraction of evil is for the body, or for the intellect, or for the spirit, it is a positive and intense attraction. There is tingling delight in letting the senses take the reins, and carry us wherever they please, down into forbidden things and away into the far country. There are glamour and gladness in the unrestricted play of the mental powers and the successful assertion of the self-life, although these are divorced from God and from goodness, as they were in giants like Goethe and Napoleon. There are quiet, untroubled, proud days and nights for the spirit, so long as it imagines that it is amply equipped for its own preservation and progress, and discards the grace that is superhuman and Divine.

But these are imaginations we shall not contrive to keep up always. Sin's pleasure is *proskairos*—'for a season.' The season may run its course with a lightning rapidity. The enticement of bodily indulgence is apt to vanish suddenly, and the eyes are opened, and men know that they have reaped a bitter harvest. Or the season may be longer. Napoleon's Elba and St. Helena are postponed for years. A man dies in the spiritual arrogance which dispenses with God in Christ. But then death is the commencement rather than the close of life; and, after it, the disillusionment and the deluge follow. The Gospels speak, in a tremendous phrase, of 'eternal sin.' And eternal sin is sin without any pleasures in it. It is sin which is conscious bondage, but from which the soul is helpless to escape. It is misery unrelieved and immeasurable.

2. There is a religion which is evanescent. Here and there human beings may be found who are quite without religion—materialists, unvisited by a quickening glimpse of the supersensual world, or by a passing wish for some kindlier and heavenlier realm than that of the actual; and atheists, whose denial of God is unreserved and complete. But the materialists and the atheists are, happily, a small company. The peril besetting most of us is not that we shall strip ourselves of all religion but that we shall be satisfied with its simulacrum and husk. The hearers of the rocky ground welcome the good seed, but they are too shallow to hold it fast, and to give it depth and room that it may bear its proper fruit. They dure 'for a while,' but only for a while. Their religion may be mainly a stirring of the emotions—they are melted, moved, lifted above themselves—or it may be a reliance on what is outwardly right and seemly and sacred. But in both cases the man is *proskairos,* one whose goodness is no more permanent than the morning cloud and the early dew. Emotions have to be translated into the trust that is lifelong, the love which is the deepest and highest thing in the nature, the loyalty that refuses to swerve; or how soon they will be dissipated! Custom and observance must be of the essence of the soul; or they will shrivel into nothingness before the brightness of Christ's appearing. 'Jerusalem the earthly,' writes Stephen Graham, 'is a pleasure-ground for wealthy sightseers and a place where every stone has been commercialized by tourist agencies or by greedy monks.' That is not the Jerusalem which is above, which is true, and which will remain when sun and moon are blotted out. But when the traveller adds: 'In my heart was a little compass-box where an arrow always pointed steadily to Jerusalem,' we catch a gleam of the better and more lasting City. And may God lodge in our hearts the arrow which always points steadily to this supreme Jerusalem!

3. Finally, there is a world which is perishing. The things which are seen, says St. Paul. He is thinking, not so much of Nature—the green earth, and the round ocean, and the living air, and the blue sky; nor yet of society—home, the Church, and State; but rather of that world which is inimical to Christ and Christ's people. Pressure, and perplexity, and persecution are in it; downcasting is in it, and the bearing about in the body of the death of the Lord Jesus. St. Paul was familiar with the storms that sweep across its landscape, and the floods and fires into which its inhabitants are plunged. And, if we cleave to Christ through good report and ill, we shall be familiar with them also, although our griefs for the gospel's sake will not be so sharp or so severe as those of St Paul.

But the things which are seen are *proskaira.* They are brief-lived, soon to be removed. They last 'for a moment.' The affliction which is peculiar to the Christian is in its essence so light and temporary that it is not worth a thought in comparison with the glory about to be revealed. That is unending, infinite, inconceivable. That will never fade. If it is our portion, why should we be swallowed up of sorrow? We shall dwell in the House of the Lord, in the radiance of the Face of Christ, so long as the House stands and the Face shines.

There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.

There everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers;
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heavenly land from ours.

The Reproach of Christ.

Heb. xi. 26.—'Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.'

THE writer of this passage speaks as though Moses were conscious of the spirit and temper of Christ, and directly imitated them. He bore a reproach which is distinctly called the reproach of Christ. It is as though the image and career of Christ glowed before his mind's eye—a vision, a picture, directly invigorating and inspiring him—yet many centuries were to elapse before Christ was born in Bethlehem. How can we explain these things? Is this passage a deliberate utterance of truth, or merely a brilliant paradox? It is not paradox, but truth; and the truth it expresses is this, that the Christ-spirit has always existed in the world, and to conform to that spirit is to be a Christian. The Christ-spirit was abroad in the days of Moses; that spirit brooded over the spirit of Moses, and wrought itself into his spirit, so that he, as well as St. Paul, might have said:

Scarcely I catch the words of his revealing,
Hardly I hear him, dimly understand,
Only the Power that is within me pealing
Lives on my lips and beckons to my hand.

But vague, and sweet, and awful as was that vision, yet it was authentic, and through the mist and cloud of dreams the unborn Christ called to Moses, '*Follow me.*' And when he gave his life for the people he did a Christ-like thing: he went the way that Christ trod, he bore the reproach that Christ bore, he was the Christ of his time and nation, for where the spirit of Christ is, there is Christ.

Let us, then, forget for a moment all the imperial and political aspects of the life of Moses, all that impresses the mind with a sense of earthly grandeur and genius, and come to the root motive of his life, and we shall see that this statement is not extravagant and not paradoxical. Out of what motives did the career of Moses take its rise? What were its initiative forces? They were two—quite simple, not altogether rare, and certainly noble.

1. The first was that he *loved the poor.* He had, as we know, every temptation and incentive to a luxurious and stately life in the court of Pharaoh, and it is even possible that the succession to that splendid throne might have been his. He was highly educated, a man of the rarest culture, and master of all that occult knowledge on which Egypt prided herself. He had in the nature of his own life not a single cause of dissatisfaction, none of those mortifications of pride and ambition which have often driven powerful men into revolt against an established order of society. He might, without the slightest blame to himself, have taken up the duties of his august position, have lived a life of sustained and stately splendour, have exercised his great gifts in such a way as to have benefited his adopted nation, and left a deep mark upon his times. What prevented him from walking in a way of life to which it seemed Providence had especially promoted him, and for which his genius fitted him? Simply this: he loved the poor. He saw in his daily walks the toiling Hebrews, men of his own race and blood, inhumanly treated, and crushed beneath a cruel tyranny; he looked upon their sad, dejected faces, their grey and bitter lives, with something more than curiosity—with a pity at once angry and tender. He could not steel his heart to that vision. He could not take all this mass of distress and misery as a necessary part of the civilization in which he found himself. He could not regard it as inevitable, because his moral sense

told him that no wrong was ever inevitable or necessary. And so he came to love them, unworthy as they were of love; and was not that a Christ-like temper? He was ready to give up everything for their redemption; and was not that the temper of Him who, being rich, for our sakes became poor? He was willing to stake his whole life on their regeneration; and was not that the spirit which took Christ to the Cross? There is the root of his life—and the root also of every noble and Christ-like life—he loved the poor.

2. He was also *willing to bear reproach for them,* and that was the second root-motive of his life. This motive, as a shaping force on conduct, obviously carries us much further than the first. It is no uncommon thing for a sensitive and large-hearted man to love the poor. The artist who finds material for his art in the lives of the poor would say he loved them, and the novelist who describes their simple annals would say the same thing, and each would be sincere. So far as sentiments of pity, affection, and respect go, there are many of us who would say that we love the poor; but it is quite another thing to be willing to bear reproach for them. For what does this mean? It means a willingness to identify our lot with theirs; to champion their cause; to challenge ridicule or hatred by exposing their wrongs; to sacrifice worldly ambition to ameliorate their lot; to deny ourselves social pleasures and esteem for their sake; to labour for their help; and which of us is willing to do that? But Moses did it. With the choice offered him of a life among the wealthy or the poor, he deliberately cast in his lot with the poor. Among the wealthy and the cultured his genius was sure of appreciation; but among the poor he well knew he would be misunderstood, for they were too dull and brutalized by long oppression, and too suspicious of the ruling classes, even to recognize that genius. Among the cultured, the natural comrades of his life, his great learning was a talisman, commanding respect; but he well knew that to these Hebrew slaves that very superiority of mind would be an offence. Looked at from a purely natural and human point of view, he was throwing his life away when he cast in his lot with the slaves of Pharaoh. It would have been easy to argue that, even if these slaves had wrongs that needed redress, a much less important man than Moses could have made the Israelites an efficient leader. No doubt in many a conversation with his friends this argument was brought to bear on him, and he was reminded of the duty which culture owes to itself and to that law of intellectual economy which should forbid genius from wasting itself upon a task which others could perform as well. But to all such arguments Moses was deaf. He was filled with the self-forgetful ardour of the enthusiast, the strong and simple passion of the patriot and the reformer, and he took the burden of reproach upon him without complaint, and even with a sort of joy, for the sake of the oppressed. And this again was a Christ-like act—it was what Christ did when He made it the chief boast of His ministry that the poor had the gospel preached to them, when He incurred, by His open comradeship with the discredited, the reproach that He was the friend of publicans and sinners.

Chronology separates men, or seems to do so; but spiritual affinity defies chronology. And it is this law of spiritual affinity which this passage declares; the only real unity is unity of soul, and because the Christian spirit has always been in the world, it is no outrage on reason to claim that whosoever in any age has been conformed to that spirit was a Christian. Thus Moses was the shadow of Christ cast before Him, and in bearing the reproach of Christ he proved his affinity with Christ.

¶ By a sure instinct the Church discerned in the death of the martyr the repetition, not the less real because faint, of the central Sacrifice of Calvary. 'As we behold the martyrs,' writes Origen, 'coming forth from every Church to be brought before the tribunal, we see in each the Lord Himself condemned.' So Irenæus speaks of the martyrs as 'endeavouring to follow in the footsteps of Christ,' and of St. Stephen, as 'imitating in all things the Master of Martyrdom.' In the early Church the imitation of Christ, as a formal principle in ethics, played but a secondary part, so far, at any rate, as the average member was concerned. The martyrs and confessors alone were thought of as actually following and imitating Jesus; they alone were the 'true disciples' of the Master. It was enough for the servant that he should be as his Lord.[1]

[1] H. B. Workman, *Persecution in the Early Church*, 21.

The Call to Endurance.

Heb. xi. 27.—'He endured as seeing him who is invisible.'

It has long been customary to speak of four cardinal virtues which go to make up the character of a virtuous or good man. These are wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. If a man is to be called religious as well as virtuous, he must have something substantial to show in addition to the graces of faith, hope, and charity. But there is another quality which seems entitled to be added to the list. It is not, in itself, a virtue or a grace, and may even be the most prominent feature of a character which is wicked and irreligious; but it at least seems to be a necessary ingredient of all noble qualities, to contribute a large part of their value, and to be required to make them constant and effective. This quality has been called purposefulness, but may perhaps be better termed endurance. It is the power and habit of infusing an energy of the will into whatsoever we believe, or do, or even suffer—so that we cling with tenacity to our convictions, persevere in our undertakings with resolution, and submit with patience and fortitude to the calamities which we have not the power or the skill to avert.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews may be cited in support of our estimate of the quality of endurance. He is speaking in our text of the man to whom the Jews looked back as their greatest hero—the man who delivered their forefathers out of the Egyptian slavery, who moulded them into a nation, who gave them the knowledge of the true God and of His law, and who led them through the desert to the promised land. And the greatest tribute which he can pay to Moses, the phrase which seems most adequately to describe the character and achievements of the incomparable hero-prophet, is the verdict that he endured, that he was one who held his ground.

We live in a time when there is a special call to endurance. In all periods more than one half of individual duty takes this form; and in our day, when many things have habituated or tempted us to live according to a gospel of comfort, we specially need to cultivate the temper of the man who endured. We shall therefore collect some lessons for our individual instruction from the familiar story of the life which our text proposes as a model of endurance.

(1) The choice has to be made, near the beginning of every career, between the life of pleasure and the life of duty. And clearly the safest and most effective guiding is to realize in the time of temptation the presence and the commandment of the invisible God. But in addition it is at least a counsel of prudence to remember the rule of Moses, and if we will bring things to the test of happiness, to distinguish between the lower pleasures which are only for a season, and the higher which abide, and to pursue those which seem attractive, not only in the light of to-day, but from the point of view of the day after to-morrow and the year after the next. Were this test of Moses, as we call it, more generally acted on, the world would not be so full as it is of blighted hopes and squandered lives, and of the remorse of those who sold their birthright for a mess of pottage. Nor does the warning of the text refer only to gross sins. There are many whose lives have been all that is meant by respectable, but who in later years find existence a burden because they neglected to make for their old age a spiritual provision of interests and hopes which could survive the impoverishing raids of time. Let us therefore lay to heart anew the commonplace lesson as to the wisdom of building for the future, and realize that future as one which comprehends not only the seasons of our earthly life, but the possibilities and the certainties of an endless life.

(2) There are many who, in the ordeal of seeming failure, will recognize their own sorrowful experience. The man whose early promise never came to fruition, the woman whose existence is felt to be without meaning or purpose, are figures that meet us at every turn; and besides these there is the great multitude who have been stricken down by sickness or accident, and whose lives trail onward with broken wing. It is only those who have known such an experience from within, who have seen it as their own and not another's, that are aware how hard a thing it is to be brave and patient, and to preserve the heart from bitterness and rebellion. Yet nothing is more probable than that the God of the burning bush will return as the God of the second chance to those who still see and trust Him, shoulder their cross with a courageous heart, and make the best of the things

that remain. And even when it appears that the way has been finally hedged in, and that there is no further opening for dreams and schemes of earthly service, there remains the consolation of the life to come with its infinite possibilities of congenial service—'thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.'

(3) Few words are needed in praise of the quality of perseverance. It sometimes happens, indeed, that the scheme of life as a whole has to be radically altered in view of fuller self-knowledge, or of a change of outward circumstances; and it may call for as much will-power to alter the scheme as to persevere with the earlier plan. But even in that case the change must be consistent with constancy to a larger purpose if the whole is to be called good. In general it may be said that a man is a man, and not a weakling or a child, in the measure in which he can be depended on to place the energy of his will behind his purposes, and also to put a large dash of it into his opinions and his hopes.

Endurance is the crowning quality,
And patience all the passion of great hearts;
These are their stay, and when the leaden world
Sets its hard face against their faithful thought,
And brute strength, like a scornful conqueror,
Clangs his huge mace down in the other scale,
The inspired soul but flings his patience in,
And slowly that outweighs the ponderous globe—
One faith against a whole earth's unbelief,
One soul against the flesh of all mankind.

Seeing.

Heb. xi. 27.—'Seeing him who is invisible.'

A PARADOX so startling suggests a mystic interpretation, for how can you, on the plane of ordinary consciousness, see what is invisible? Well, there is seeing and seeing. It must be of deliberate intention, as a stimulus to thought, that two Greek words, with an important distinction of meaning, are used by the writer of the Fourth Gospel in the same sentence for seeing. The distinction is ignored in the Authorized Version, and only partly suggested in the Revised. The Revised Version translates the passage, 'A little while, and ye behold me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see me.' The Greek word (*theorite*) translated 'behold,' refers to physical sight depending on the bodily organs. The word translated 'see' (*opsesthe*), refers to perception, independent of the bodily organs. Sophocles, in the *Œdipus*, constantly uses this second word of mental vision, and it is used in the New Testament more than thirty times of spiritual sight as opposed to bodily vision. Our Lord's words, then, linked together the two worlds of 'sense' and 'spirit,' upon the boundaries of which He was lingering during the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension. Paraphrased, they would signify, 'In a short time, My bodily presence which has been dear to you, which you have beheld with your eyes, which your hands have handled, shall pass from your sight; but soon, after a brief period of doubt and perplexity, you shall receive a new spiritual sight; and, under the illuminating touch of the Pentecostal afflatus, a faculty of perception shall be given to you which shall fill you with undaunted courage, for you will be conscious of the thrilling touch of My Spiritual Presence; you will be so penetrated by its reality that it will transfigure your lives, drive away your fears, empower you with such enthusiasm that, as My representatives, you will move the world. Out of weakness you shall be made strong; you shall quench the violence of fire, stop the mouths of lions, put to flight the armies of the aliens, and endure as seeing Me, though invisible.'

1. These two methods of sight implied by the two Greek words operate in different spheres, and are placed by St. Paul in the strongest contrast. 'The natural man,' he says, 'receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; . . . because they are spiritually discerned.' There is nothing wrong in the impressions conveyed by a healthy natural intelligence. The human mind on the plane of the word translated 'behold' (*theorite*), though it is condemned by one school of thought as 'mortal mind,' has its great use in establishing religious convictions. It has dealt powerfully with the evidential theology of the Church. Our great thinking agnostics have proved by it that Deism is more rational than atheism. By its investigations into ether, and its discovery of vortex rings, it is rapidly abolishing materialism in its

coarsest sense; but it is beyond its province to move a step beyond logical demonstration. Spiritual sight, on the other hand, has a sphere of its own. Truths are seen by it that are invisible to the strongest brain; a knowledge is possessed by it which makes the wisdom of the world but folly. The superiority of this spiritual sight, and its independence of the natural faculties, have frequently been manifested in human beings in whom the natural sense-consciousness was wholly wanting.

¶ I often refer to the case of Laura Bridgeman. She interested me so much that I cannot forget her. She was deaf, dumb, and blind from birth. When the spirit imprisoned in her body was reached by instruction through the language of touch, it was found that a consciousness of an unnamed, undefined Divine Being had always been fully active. It was the same in the case of Helen Tasker, in the Perkins Institute in Boston. She, too, was blind, deaf and dumb from birth, and when Bishop Phillips Brooks began to teach her of God, she signalled back, in the touch language, 'I have always known that, but I did not know what to call it.' In these cases, the eyes capable of 'seeing him who is invisible' had not been either hindered or aided by natural reason. Spiritual consciousness had automatically evolved. [1]

2. Can this faculty be trained? Certainly it can. The faculty of seeing expressed in the Greek word *theorite* is eminently capable of education. No organ is more responsive to training than the natural eye. The Esquimaux can see a white fox on the snow that would be wholly invisible to you even with powerful glasses. The mosaic workers of the Vatican can perceive shades of colour imperceptible to others. If the human will is not equally capable of training this inner faculty, the lower gift of natural sight is no true analogy of the higher vision. It was to this inward sight that the Lord always appealed in His parables and warnings and entreaties. The door at which He stood and knocked was the door of the inner mystic eye. Without this insight, His teaching, though ethically useful, was spiritually profitless. The key to the parables and the beatitudes is the saying, 'Hereby we know that he dwelleth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.'

There is a valuable little book called *The Modern Mystic's Way,* which is illuminating and suggestive as to the connexion between the human mind and the Christ mind. But one can teach only what one knows, and my own experience is that the training of the spiritual eye is, by forceful inward thinking, strong enough and sustained enough to reach and vibrate the inmost string in the harp of your life. It is difficult to express it in words; it is not a dogma, it is an experience. It matters not how you name a power so long as it really works, and this does work. You cannot put into words what comes to you as a revelation. But it is mentally opening your inmost being to the all-vital Intensity while you, for a time, resolutely shut out all impressions of the material world. The Divinity within you, which is really the mainspring of your conscious life, is longing, with infinite desire, to communicate Himself to you, and when, with eager receptive thought, you meet that desire, you do mentally see God. You are more sure of God than if some objective Deity stood before you. You have an indescribable thrilling consciousness of God, and that is 'seeing him who is invisible.' It is a foretaste of what 'seeing God' will be in the higher life of the next world. You positively meet the eye of God. And then, as Browning says, 'How soon a smile of God can change the world.' Your personal outlook on the world is changed. Your worries are gone. No unanswered riddles of this material world vex you. You are clad 'in the whole armour of God.' You are just blinded to other things by your beatific vision. Von Herkomer once showed me an invention of his own, a brilliant incandescent point with which he etched on leather or on wood. After using it he was so blinded by its brilliancy that he could see nothing else for a considerable time. While you thus realize God, while you see 'him who is invisible,' you can see nothing else, He 'hides you privily in his own Presence from the provoking of all men, he keeps you secretly in his tabernacle from the strife of tongues.' You remember that wonderful 'saying of Jesus' discovered in Egypt in 1904: 'Let not him who seeks the Father cease until he finds Him; and having found Him, let him be amazed; and being amazed he shall reign, and

[1] B. Wilberforce, *Inward Vision*, 15.

reigning shall rest.' In other words, Realize God, be mentally absorbed in the realization, and you shall reign over material conditions, and you shall rest.

3. This training of the spiritual eye, this seclusion, is not meant to emancipate you from your material duties, but it will sanctify and illuminate them. That commendation of Mary over Martha is rather a puzzling challenge to thought. It would seem that the true woman is a blend of the two characters. Coventry Patmore says:

> As in the maiden path she trod,
> Fair was the wife foreshewn;
> A Mary in the House of God,
> A Martha in her own.

To the material life belong enterprise, labour, commerce, art, and all the various duties of human existence. To the supermaterial life belong the Eternal realities of our immortal Divine Being, and He who has 'seen God' makes 'of the twain,' as St. Paul says, 'one new man.' [1]

Seeing Christ.

Heb. xi. 27.—'Seeing him who is invisible.'

Who is this? It is Christ for us, as it was Christ for those to whom this Epistle was sent. Christ is invisible. Can we see Him? Surely His disciples had an advantage over us. If we could have 'companied with him' as they did! But consider three things.

1. Was ever man portrayed so graphically as Jesus is in those wonderful biographies of the four Gospels—the joint productions of the Holy Ghost and the Evangelists; Divinely inspired, and yet so intensely and livingly human? His frame and features, what He was like as to His outer man, His gait and carriage, you have no means of guessing. But otherwise, you have Him all before you. Lo! He stands, with outstretched arms, clasping babes to His bosom. Hark! He speaks a word in season to that weary one, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee.' See! a funeral procession stopped, and a widow's heart made to leap for joy! Come! look into that dark chamber; go to that fresh grave! Jesus weeps! Yes; you follow Him as He walks by Galilee's lake and in the cities of Judah. Then, coming on to the close, the silence before His judges, the eye looking upon Peter, the tender word from the cross to John and Mary, the prayer for His murderers, the strangely calm converse with the repentant thief, the cry of desertion, the closing sigh of repose—you see and hear it all! It is to you as it was to the very eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses themselves; as if you, as well as they, had seen it all.

2. You have the full benefit of sharing with them in that better seeing of their Master which they obtained when His own promise was fulfilled, and the other Comforter came. They themselves impart to you all that they were then taught as to the high and deep meanings, and the manifold bearings on the character and government of God, of that human history, that human experience, which, while they were eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of it, was in many particulars so incomprehensible. It is as illuminated by all the light of the insight which they got after Pentecost that you now read, as they wrote them, the sayings and doings of the great Redeemer. He is set forth speaking words of wisdom and grace, doing deeds of mercy and love; He is set forth crucified; He is set forth not merely as He appeared to them when He was with them, but, over-and above that, as He appeared to them after He was gone; with the new spiritual apprehension to which they then attained of the whole plan and purpose of His ministry, the entire scope and efficacy of His mission. It is as having died and risen again, as being not now dead, but alive for evermore, that He speaks to you. And you, hearing, not His Apostles, but through and with them Himself, seem to see Him who is invisible.

3. For it is not to be overlooked that the same Spirit who taught and moved them to realize the Lord's presence as if they still both heard and saw Him, is dwelling and working in you. To you, as to them, He testifies of Christ, taking of what is His and showing it to you. He brings to your remembrance the things which Christ has said, and opens them up to you, and applies them to your case, whatever it may be; so pointedly, so vividly, that you gaze into His face as you say 'Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.' Thus

[1] B. Wilberforce, *Inward Vision*.

He really does what some profane dreamers or deceivers profess to do. They pretend, by their mystic or magic legerdemain of clairvoyance, to establish a relation between you and some departed saint or sinner, in virtue of which it shall be to you as if you saw the man now and talked with him face to face. It is an impious mockery of the office and work of the Holy Ghost. They say, but it is a lie, that the spirit whom they evoke will tell you news of the unseen world; of heaven and of hell, if there be a hell. That is more than the Holy Ghost Himself undertakes to do; more than, according to any promise, I can expect Him to do, when He reveals Christ to me and in me. He bids me read and ponder the record of Christ which He has inspired. He has nothing more, nothing else, to say. But He brings that record and my experience very close together, and welds them in one; so that, by means of that record, and using its contents as materials, I have real present converse with Christ now. Is not that something like seeing Him as He is? Is not the Holy Spirit true and faithful in thus revealing Christ? He loves Him too well, and He loves you too well, to interpose between Christ and you. He does not speak of Himself. He does not glorify Himself. He does not hinder Christ from Himself manifesting Himself to you. It is His very office and business, it is His joy, to remove every obstacle of carnality and unbelief, and hardness of heart, and blindness of mind on your part, just in order that Christ may manifest Himself to you, as He does not unto the world; that you may see Him, though the world see Him not, that you may be as seeing Him who is invisible. He brings Christ and you together face to face, that you may speak to Christ and Christ may speak to you, to your heart. Lo! Jesus; very near to you, at your ear, at your elbow, able to speak, now actually speaking, to your heart! Whatever your mood of mind may be, whatever your trial, whatever your need: look out! look up! as seeing Him who is invisible. Catch His eye! Feel His touch! Look! He smiles; or perhaps frowns, and smiles again. Listen! Did ever man speak as this man is speaking to you now? It is no dream. It is a blessed reality. You gaze on His face, you lean on His bosom, you whisper in His ear, as John the beloved did at the supper. You rest and rejoice as seeing Him who is invisible.

The Fall of Jericho.

Heb. xi. 30.—'By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.'

THE story of the taking of Jericho is part of the larger story which tells us how the Children of Israel, set free from bondage in Egypt, found a new home and country. This new home and country they secured, when all is said, by fighting. In order to secure it they had to dispossess those who were at the moment in occupation; and those earlier inhabitants they did dispossess (and the Bible makes no attempt to soften the colour here) with what we to-day must call extreme rigour and even cruelty.

1. Now that does raise a moral difficulty for people like ourselves who, with regard to the whole matter, are in the position of spectators. We may ask by what right those hordes of Israelites overran a country whose inhabitants were not quarrelling with them, driving the people from their homes, and in some cases even exterminating them. The Bible itself seems in a way to feel this difficulty, and softens it to a certain extent by declaring that those Israelites were really the original inhabitants of the country; that they had gone down into Egypt for a season under stress of famine; that when they returned long afterwards they found their country in the hands of aliens, and that, in dispossessing those aliens, they were simply resuming what was their own. To a certain extent that does reduce the burden of the problem, but only to a certain extent. There is no doubt that in our view to-day the forcible occupation of a piece of territory by armed bands, and the ruthless destruction of its men and women and children, would be branded by us as an offence against international morality.

(1) There are two things, however, which, in dealing with any primitive page in our Bible, we must remember. The first is, that there are many things recorded in the Bible which the Bible itself does not necessarily approve. Even when it is explicitly said that the voice of the Lord urged a man or a nation to a certain course, we are not necessarily to suppose that it was the very voice of the Lord. We are to put one thing alongside another thing, and arrive again and again at our own conclusions. We are to see earlier policies

in the light of later consequences, and *all* in the light of the very highest conception of God which we ourselves have been led into; and only then are we to say whether it was the voice of the Lord which urged men to a certain action, or whether it was—a very different thing—their own dominant ambition which they more or less honestly supposed had the Divine approval.

Just so, to take an instance far down in the Hebrew history, did Saul of Tarsus honestly believe that the voice of God was calling upon him to search out Christians everywhere and put them to death. And, in obedience to that voice which Saul of Tarsus thought he heard, he searched high and low for Christians, and actually did put them to death, until one day, in the very height and passion of his obedience, he met the withstanding Face of Christ Himself, whereupon he learned that it was not the voice of the Lord that had been speaking to him.

(2) But there is another thing. Come to it by an illustration. Recall that fine couplet of Shelley: 'Time, like a dome of many-coloured glass, stains the white radiance of eternity.' Say these words over again until you *see* the very thing which they call up to your imagination. Time, this historical process, a dome of many-coloured glass, and we gathered beneath the dome. Overhead, between us and the sky, there is this intervening medium of glass in varied hues. There is red, there is purple, there is green, there is blue, and there is yellow; in the centre, let us say, there is *pure* glass, which has no distracting colour or quality. Through these various coloured panes the light of the sky, the light of the sun, pours in and falls upon the tessellated pavement in colours that correspond to the medium through which the light has passed. The light itself, the light of the sky, the light of the sun, the objective truth—that is the same; but, reaching our feet through these various media, that one light takes these various colours.

Well now, apply all that to the revelation which God has given us of Himself in the Bible. That revelation cannot but bear traces of the means through which it has come. It cannot but bear traces of the general level of human intelligence and moral refinement of the time in which it was given. It is no disparagement of the light of the sun that the medium through which it passes qualifies its pureness. A wise man certainly will not reject the light that reaches him, saying that it is not light at all because it bears traces of a distorting element. A wise man pondering the situation will rather give thanks that we are not left in darkness; that beyond those shifting, changing lights there is something to which, if we could only get outside the dome of many-coloured glass, outside the limitations of our ignorance and prejudice, we might throw open our hearts as to the pure truth of God. What we Christians believe is, that once upon a time in human history there lived upon this earth a pure unstained soul, a soul which presented no obscuring or distorting opposition to the white radiance of God's truth—the soul of Jesus; and that the light which comes to us from God through Him is the pure and absolute truth.

2. Now for the story of the taking of Jericho.

(1) The first thing one must say is—and it ought at once to restrain all hasty judgment—that this story which seems to make a great demand upon our credulity is a story which *was passed,* that is to say, approved for publication, away down in the later days of the Hebrew people, by a body of men who knew the hard discipline of history, as we have never needed to know it until these very days. The story of the taking of Jericho by an assault of faith was reissued, approved, passed on as a document on which the religious soul could refresh itself, and guide itself, by a body of men in whose veins ran the blood of the captives of Babylon, of men who had seen the city of God sacked and outraged, men who with their wives and children had been driven like beasts across the desert into Mesopotamia. The men who *passed* this story were not fools, and they were not children. They had no reason to speak about life as an easy thing, or of this world of ours as a place in which all that men have to do in order to achieve great results is to blow a trumpet and walk round about the object whose overthrow they seek. And it was such men who allowed this story to stand. They knew—none better—that it would never find a place in military handbooks; but they hoped it would find a place in the literature of the soul. They knew that the truth and pith of the story would be perceived quite clearly in every age by people who had insight, who had moral sagacity,

who had reverence; that it would do little children no harm to take it as a story and swallow it in every detail, for it would leave with them, if all else should go, the tendency, more precious than wisdom, in every great emergency to lift up their eyes to God. And they knew that it would do grown-up people all the good in the world to embrace the principle of this story, the parable and final moral truth of it.

(2) For the business on which the Israelites were engaged was one in which the conscience of their people, as represented by their religion, was heartily with them. It was a business, too, on which they pledged themselves that, if God should send them victory, they would make nothing out of it for themselves. They were willing, indeed, as happened later on at Ai—they were willing, so great was their integrity, that God should smite them before their enemies if He could find within their ranks even one treacherous or self-seeking and profiteering man. That is to say, it was a business on which they wanted only to be the instruments of God's will. In such an exalted mood, the story tells us, they set out, men who had nothing to lose because they had nothing to gain, for all their gains had to be devoted to God, with the happiness that such men will always have, the good humour, the patience. For seven days they marched round the city, and on the seventh day they marched round the city seven times. On that seventh day they gave a shout; whereupon the hearts of their enemies failed within them, and, in the vivid language of the East, the walls of the city fell flat.

Let me see a nation with this purity and high intention, unanimous under God, in which not one man is left who has the moral taint of Achan, not one man with a private business on hand, a nation patient, friendly within its own borders, believing in God, prepared to endure, ready to go on with things which, in themselves, do not seem to be of direct value, but which, being maintained day by day, sustain the general spirit and keep alive the indomitable will. Let me see *now* such a nation, and let it be our own nation; and does anyone doubt that this serious universe of ours, which must always be searching for serious instruments, will establish such a nation in the counsels of the world! Nay, I should go further. Let me see such a nation, purged of all self-seeking, holding itself the instrument of a holy will; a nation yielding itself freely to its own highest personal and political traditions, seeking nothing in its own triumph but the triumph of those ideas and ideals which save and secure mankind; let me see such a nation, and is it a thing to be doubted that the arm of the enemies of such a nation should suddenly be paralyzed? For they should see, as, not our own soldiers only, but the advancing hosts of the enemy after the battle of Mons declare they saw, battalions of radiant fighters in the sky, withstanding them, causing their blood to turn into water, overwhelming them with the majesty of God.[1]

The story of the fall of Jericho is written that through comfort of it we might have hope. For—

> Fierce may be the conflict,
> Strong may be the foe,
> But the King's own army
> None can overthrow.
> Round His standard ranging,
> Victory is secure,
> For His truth unchanging
> Makes the triumph sure.

Rahab.

Heb. xi. 31.—'By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not.'

Rahab was a bad woman. If the statements about her in the Book of Joshua are true, no approbation by the author of this Epistle, or by St. James in his Epistle, can alter the fact that she was a bad woman. She was sensual and vicious, she was a liar, and she was a traitor. She deceived her own king, she helped to betray her own nation, she befriended her country's enemies, and she was cunning enough to save her own skin and that of her own family when all her neighbours—men, women and children—were cruelly massacred.

Jewish writers may extol her because she took their nation's side, but that will not weigh with us. Rahab was well pleased to survive her country's ruin, but we see nothing to admire there.

On the other hand, there can be no doubt that Rahab is commended in the Epistle of St. James and in this Epistle. The commendation is brief but real. She is commended in Hebrews for her faith, and in both Epistles for her kindness to the

[1] J. A. Hutton, *Discerning the Times*, 246.

spies. Nothing is to be gained by explaining away Rahab's bad character on the one hand, or the approbation of Scripture on the other. Scripture approves of many characters, many men and women in Old Testament story, and not one of them was perfect. And really those who come to their Bibles with the notion that men like Abraham, Joseph, Samuel, Elijah, and Isaiah are to be considered right and pure and perfect, except when Scripture explicitly pronounces them wrong and at fault—such readers will read their Bibles with a bandage over one eye at least. Good and bad mingle in all human characters. And Scripture never commends the badness.

1. What, then, were the good points in Rahab? What is it that partially redeems her fame? What is it that a religious man can find in her to approve?

The author of Hebrews, an exceedingly religious man, replies—faith. What does he mean by faith? He does not mean quite the same as St. Paul means by that word. He does not mean a personal attachment in spirit to the Lord Jesus Christ. He looks at faith from a different point of view. He considers it as a faculty in a man whereby things that do not yet exist are clearly imagined, and a gain still in the far future is realized so vividly that sacrifices in the present can be made for it and are made for it. Abraham's faith was his power of realizing the future country, the future home promised him by God, and he proved his faith by endurance of hardship in his long migratory life. Faith so conceived can be found in other realms than religion. Why did Palissy, the great French potter, expend all his substance on constructing and feeding his big furnace? Why in his moment of desperation did he tear up the very floors of his cottage, and fling the boards, along with all his chairs and tables, into the flames—causing his wife to rush out shrieking to the neighbours that Palissy had gone raving mad. The neighbours agreed with the wife, but they were all wrong. Palissy was not mad. He had faith. He believed a few degrees more heat would mean victory in his long fight, a splendid discovery and enduring fame. He saw success within reach, and counted the sacrifice of floors and furniture as nothing in the balance. By faith he flung them into the fire, by faith he endured the objurgations of friends and neighbours who had none, by faith he produced the works of art which now are priceless. But it may be asked: Is this faculty spiritual at all? Is it even moral? Is it not an exercise of pure intellect, a scientific use of a powerful imagination, and therefore only a special gift of the Creator, which, however marvellous, is no more creditable, no more praiseworthy, in its possessor than a stature of six feet six, as compared with one of five feet five? The author of Hebrews might reasonably reply: No, because it involves sacrifice. Any man almost may dream a fine dream, but he who toils and suffers to turn his fine dream into a fact—he alone has faith. Faith is not only to possess a vision, but to be possessed by it—not only to see a goal invisible to others, but to love it, and make for it, and battle onwards through toil and difficulty till the goal is reached. Faith is a discernment of facts not obvious, and a building of one's life on the value of those facts.

If it be said that such a faculty may be found at work in thoroughly selfish men of an ambitious turn, in men who are misers to-day in order to be millionaires to-morrow, the author of Hebrews might reasonably reply: Yes, that is a perverted, misused form of faith, but still those men and all men who can toil and suffer for the sake of a future seen only with the inner eye have in their possession the root, at least, of all spiritual religion and all nobility of character.

And that is what in Rahab attracted the sacred writers. A commonplace woman would have slipped out and beckoned to the men of Jericho to come at once. A thoroughly brutal woman would have stabbed or poisoned the two spies herself, and then have run to the king for his congratulations and a monument in the public square. A cowardly woman would never have dreamed of sheltering the public enemy. But Rahab was neither brutal, nor vain, nor cowardly. Her faith lifted her above all that. She saw the truth, and took the risk of constructing her conduct on that vision. She saw that the city of Jericho was doomed, that nothing she could do would save it, but she saw that by risking her own life then she might save those dearest to her thereafter. It is not fair to say she was anxious about her own skin. She deliberately faced the risk, a terrible risk of instant and merciless death as a traitor at the hands of

the men of Jericho, in the hope of saving her parents and brothers and sisters from the ruin that would come on Jericho in any case. Rahab took her life in her hand and acted on the truth that she saw with the inner eye. She had faith, the root of true religion, the basis of sound character.

2. Observe also that Rahab's faith, with all its crudeness, contained a new vision of God. The author of Hebrews implies in all his examples of this faculty that those who had it turned their eyes and their efforts toward some promise, some ideal that came from God. Probably he would deny the name of faith to all seeing and striving after a goal that was not God-given. Rahab was brought up a pagan, but observe her words: 'I know that Jehovah hath given you the land. . . . We have heard how Jehovah dried up the water of the Red Sea before you. . . . And as soon as we heard it our hearts did melt. For Jehovah your God, He is God in heaven above, and on earth beneath.'

Here was a pagan trying to make her views of the unseen square with the facts of life, and, better still, striving to put herself on the same side as the unseen and omnipotent spirit. It may seem to some a small merit to have a more correct creed than other people. It may be no merit, but, remember, thoughts about God tell on life, and the truest thoughts are the best. Therefore we must aim ever to attain the truest belief about God, that we may walk in ever more perfect light. 'Let a man strive,' said an Eastern sage, 'to purify his thoughts, for what a man thinks that he is.' You remember that St. Paul bade us think on things that are honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report—but in the forefront of that list he put 'whatsoever things are true.' To have faith like Rahab, therefore, is to be able to look ahead, to act and suffer for what you see, and to look and act and suffer in the presence of God, realizing Him ever more grandly, more clearly, more truthfully.

3. And lastly, observe that Rahab's faith was bound up with memory of others. The writer of Hebrews and St. James naturally commend her kindness to the two young spies, but the Book of Joshua tells us more. What was the vision for which she risked her life in saving the Hebrew youths? 'Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have dealt kindly with you, that ye also will deal kindly with my father's house . . . and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and will deliver our lives from death.' And after the city fell, we read, 'the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had, all her kindred also they brought out.'

She was a bad woman; if you like, a very bad woman. Let us turn away from her sins with loathing, praying that we may have the grace of Christ Jesus that alone can save us from the same sinfulness. But that woman had a heart. Her poor worthless life was very sweet to her, but she risked it eagerly in a loving effort to save all that could be saved. Such a woman could not be kept for ever in the mud. A new life opened for Rahab from that day. A faith like hers, binding heart and will to the Spirit of Immortal Love, would lift the vilest among us to the gates of Paradise.

Are we not ourselves 'somewhat imperfect Christians'? Are we not all rather strange mixtures? Surely the vital thing is not the little more or less of consistency—all sin is deplorable—but whether we have or have not laid hold on that mighty hand which is able to raise up the lowest, and wipe away the stains, and cause us to walk in the light as He is in the light, and to be pure as He is pure.

Can peach renew lost bloom,
Or violet lost perfume;
Or sullied snow turn white as overnight?
Man cannot compass it, yet never fear;
The leper Naaman
Shows what God will and can;
God who worked there is working here;
Wherefore let shame, not gloom, betinge thy brow:
God who worked then is working now.

Deliverance.

Heb. xi. 35.—'Not accepting deliverance.'

1. Among the blessings which we connect with faith, one of the most conspicuous is deliverance. The Bible is a great record of deliverance effected

through the agency of faith. Abraham was delivered from idolatry. Joseph was delivered from his brethren. David was delivered from Goliath, and Peter from the prison at Jerusalem. And, most notable of all, there was the Exodus, when Israel was delivered from its bondage—drawn out of Egypt, by the might of God, into the peril and the prize of liberty. All these are instances of deliverance, wrought in the power of a living faith. Men trusted God, and in the joy of trust were freed from darkness and captivity. And so the Bible, as we read its pages, grows into a great argument for this, that God is able and willing, if we trust Him, to set the feet in a large room.

It was a great word with the early Quakers. John Banks in 1678 'was moved to give forth a paper' which was read in many meetings. After alluding to Christ as 'the High Priest of our profession, our Redeemer and Restorer, our Captain, King and Lawgiver, our everlasting Shepherd,' he continues: 'Although many have been our trials both within and without, the Lord, by the all-sufficiency of His power hath wrought our deliverance through all, as we have and do rely upon the same, so that sorrow and sighing is fled away, and everlasting joy is sprung up, even because of the glory and excellency of the power which hath appeared, which is all-sufficient to work our deliverance, and that throughout; yea endless joy is known here, endless comfort and satisfaction.'[1]

The same issue of faith also arrests us when we come into the company of Jesus. Here, too, as in the rest of Scripture, faith is a mighty power to deliver. We see the maniac released from legion, and sitting clothed and in his right mind. We see the withered arm restored again, the eye that had been blind regaining sight. We see a woman delivered from infirmity, and a loved brother delivered from the grave, and a great company whose eyes are glad because they have been delivered from their sin. Christ was the great enemy of bonds. He was the lover and the light of liberty. He came to preach deliverance to the captives, and to bestow the gift which was His message. And so again we learn this happy lesson, that faith is a mighty power to redeem, and that in every sphere where faith is active, one of its blessed fruits is liberty.

[1] F. A. Budge, *Annals of the Early Friends*, 161.

Of deliverance from captivity (to take one out of the many forms of deliverance which Christ and His servants effect) a striking case is recorded by Sir John Field, who commanded one of the British regiments in the Abyssinian War. King Theodore was killed in an engagement, and next day Sir John entered in his diary: 'I witnessed a most interesting scene in the fort this morning. I happened to meet Mr. Rassam, and he told me he was about to have the chains struck off the King's state prisoners, about ninety of whom consisted of the most influential chiefs of the country. I therefore went with him, and the sight was a very touching one. They crowded round Mr. Rassam, kissing his hand and bowing down to his feet. Some laughed for joy, and others wept; they embraced and kissed each other, and with countenances beaming with delight, hailed their unexpected deliverance.'[1]

2. Yet while that is true, and gloriously true, in a way we should all know something of, there is a suggestion in our text that it is fitting we should not forget. 'They were tortured, not accepting deliverance'—and the whole chapter is a song of faith. The chapter is a magnificent review of all that faith is powerful to achieve. So this is also a result of faith, *not* that it brings deliverance to a man, but that sometimes, when deliverance is offered, it gives him a fine courage to refuse it. There are seasons when faith shows itself in taking. There are seasons when it is witnessed in refusing. There is a deliverance that faith embraces. There is a deliverance that faith rejects. They were tortured, not accepting deliverance—that was the sign and seal that they were faithful. There are hours when the strongest proof of faith is the swift rejection of the larger room.

(1) Think in the first place of the martyrs, to whom our text immediately applies. When a man was charged with being a Christian, deliverance was always at his hand. He had only to blaspheme the name of Christ; a word or two of cursing—that was all. He had only to spit upon the name of Christ, when the Roman centurion scratched it on the wall. He had only to put his hand into a box, and take a grain or two of incense from the box, and sprinkle it without a single word before the beautiful statue of Diana. On the one hand was life, and life was sweet. On the other hand

[1] *Jottings from an Indian Journal*, 83.

was death, and death was terrible. On the one hand was liberty and home. On the other hand was torture and the grave. And they were tortured, not accepting deliverance. They might have had it by a single word. It was their faith that led them to the scaffold. It was better to be faithful than to be free.

(2) The same issue of faith is seen again amid the troubles of our common life. In precisely the same manner it is witnessed in the pettier martyrdoms of every day. Each of us has his cross to carry. There is no escaping from that law. Each of us has his secret bitterness, his burden, his travail, or his fear. For one the trouble may be in business matters; for another the cross may be at home; while for a third, perhaps, it is the body that wakes the heart to trembling in the night. Now, whatever be the trouble, Jesus Christ has come to preach deliverance. There is peace in Him, and quietness of soul, and conquest over death and all its terrors. But remember that there are *other* outlets which sometimes loom upon our gaze invitingly, and promise us the release that we are craving—if only we are untrue to our best selves. Probably all of us are tempted so, though these are temptations of which we seldom speak. Sometimes indeed we hardly understand them, they are so subtly hidden and disguised. But always there is a tampering with conscience in them, and a certain lowering of the flag of youth, and a sinking down upon a lower level than we know in our hearts to be worthy. It is when a man or woman is so tempted that, to be true, faith in God is needed. To choose the drudgery and spurn the liberty is the sign-manual of faith in him. 'They were tortured, not accepting deliverance.' They let the laughter and the sunshine go. And sometimes in the quiet of our obscurity, we may be called to be their children.

Do you remember Virgil's word to Dante in the Purgatorio?

> Why wilt thou thus engage thy mind,
> My Master said, and fall behind?
> What matters it to thee
> Whate'er their whispering be?
> Come on, and leave their talk alone:
> Stand like a tower firm, whose crown
> Its summit never vails
> For all the whistling gales.[1]

[1] *Purgatorio*, v. 10-15 (Toynbee's trans.).

The Better Resurrection.

Heb. xi. 35.—'Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.'

THE eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the roll-book of a noble army. Human history records the triumphs of knowledge and courage and energy; the Divine history records the triumphs of faith—that great power which rises from earth to God, and passes from time into eternity. One of the brightest pages of this Divine history is found in the Old Testament. The writer of this book looks to it, as a man might look up to the sky in a clear night when it is alive with stars, and he sees it all bright and blazoned over with the names and deeds of those who have done valiantly through their trust in the living God. He begins to count them one by one, and then they crowd upon him so thick and thronged that they cannot be reckoned up in order. They gather into clusters and constellations, like the seven stars and Orion, 'clouds of witnesses,' set there on high for spectators and examples.

Among these are found mentioned two groups—'Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.' There is a comparison here; but, before looking at it, we shall try briefly to show the meaning of the words.

This inspired writer teaches us that these ancient saints were believers in a resurrection to eternal life. It is strange that this should ever be doubted. It seems clear they were, when we think of the very instinct of the spiritual life—of such expressions as those of David: 'I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness'; or of the language of Martha and Mary when they were still standing on Old Testament ground: 'I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' Their faith could not have the same certainty and clearness which ours should have; but that they did look forward to a life to come there can be no question. They gave the best evidence of their faith, for they submitted to the most cruel tortures, and to death, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

But what are we to understand by a *better*

resurrection? If we look at the first clause of the verse we shall see—'Women received their dead raised to life again.' This was one kind of resurrection, a restoration to the life of this world, and to achieve it was a great triumph of faith. But there is another and superior resurrection—to the life of the eternal world—and the faith which carries men to this is of a nobler kind, because it is more difficult. The meaning will be more clearly seen if we render the words so as to bring out this comparison—'Women received their dead again by resurrection; and others, that they might obtain a better resurrection, were tortured, not accepting deliverance.'

The women who thus received their dead are recorded in the Old Testament. There was the woman of Sarepta, in Sidon (1 Kings xvii. 17), whose child was raised by Elijah; and there was the Shunammite woman (2 Kings iv. 18), who had her child restored by Elisha. But there must have occurred also to the mind of the writer those women whose history is given in the New Testament—the widow of Nain and the sisters of Bethany—and therefore, in speaking of this subject, we shall keep them also in memory. Those who were tortured, not accepting deliverance, may have been such men as Isaiah, who is said to have come to a violent death by persecution; and the martyrs to the true Jewish faith in the time of Antiochus. In the New Testament there were men like John the Baptist, and James, and Stephen, who, when they could not retain life with a good conscience, freely surrendered it.

There are then two spheres of faith—that of those who brought their dead back to a resurrection in this life, and that of those who pressed on for truth's sake to a better resurrection in the heavenly life.

1. The first resurrection was good, for it was a return to the light of the sun, to the love of the home, and to the work of life; but the second was better, for it was the advent of the spirit to the light that is never clouded, to the love that knows no sorrow, and to the work that never wearies or exhausts. The first was to corporeity and the resumption of the duties and pleasures of earth, but the second was better, for it was to the life of the spirit in its fullness and perfection. That was the renewal of a lease on property of incomputable value, but of a lease that, however long it be, is still short. This was the entrance into the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. That was a restoration to experiences that in their widest sweep are restricted, and in their loftiest ascents yet fall short of the eternal; but this is admission into the Father's house, with its infinite roominess and its endless stages of discovery and of growth from age to age. The son of the Shunem widow may have died again even in his childhood; the children of Jairus and of the widow of Nain were carried to the grave a second time. Lazarus was buried again. Dorcas had to leave the poor she loved and for whom she toiled, though at a later date; but Isaiah and Eleazar escaped to the life everlasting, and to the joys of the perfect home of the saints of God.

William Blake, the painter-poet, as he lay dying, said, 'He was going to that country he had all his life wished to see,' and just before he died 'he burst into singing of the things he saw.' The seer saw 'the better resurrection,' the glorious ascent to the larger and purer life of the coming world, and rejoiced in the sight. By all that heaven is better than earth, the second 'resurrection' is better than the first; and therefore Charles Kingsley scarcely need have prayed as he faced death, 'God forgive me! but I look forward to it with an intense and reverent curiosity.' Without at all disparaging the life that now is, and finding in it, as we ought, an ever-growing joy, yet we are meant by God to look forward to the further and freer stages of our spiritual development with keen interest and holy joy.

2. Again, the return to the streets of Shunem and of Nain of the youths who had gone through the gates of death was the resumption of the educational and disciplinary experiences of the present life; and since these are of God, they too are good; but the 'resurrection' of Isaiah and Eleazar was to a life of progress freed from the inevitable 'imperfections,' the necessary and inevitable limitations that bound our life right and left, and hinder us in all directions. We go where the vision is no longer blurred and dimmed, where perceptions are clear, judgments accurate, and conclusions safe. We dwell where the horizons are no longer low and narrow, but entrancingly high and vast. We soar out of the reach of the

perplexities of the 'flesh,' the struggle with temptation, the pain of self-sacrifice, the agony of sin, and dwell where we see all things in God, where we utterly and perfectly love God, and, in sacrificing ourselves to God, rest wholly in Him. John Howe had no more welcome thought of heaven than its freedom from sin. To rise to that! Oh, think of it, battling son of God; what joy unspeakable and full of glory! To continue the life of love and of aspiration, of joy and of service, under *such conditions;* and to find again what we have lost—of holy purpose, of struggling faith, of fervent desire—this is indeed the 'better resurrection.'

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed
of good shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty,
nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each
survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of
an hour.

3. But the writer to the imperilled Hebrew Christians is not writing a thesis on the soul's immortality, or citing a witness to the reality of the life after death. His purpose is practical. He is feeding faith, clearing the sight of the soul, nourishing patience, and firing courage. A better faith is created by the expectation of the 'better resurrection.' The 'women' easily believed in the power of God's prophet to kill and to make alive. Accept the doctrine of an Almighty God, and faith in the resurrection is easy; but it required insight and patience, and a venture on God of immense force, to refuse to escape from being burnt over a slow fire, in the anticipation that when the body was burnt to a cinder the *man* would be alive with God. That is a finer spirit which bears pain and loss and the scorn and despising of men for the sake of truth and goodness and duty, in the confident assurance that the next life will righten this, than is that which merely sings in church, 'I believe in the resurrection of the body.' It is a far greater achievement to be ready to die, like Luther or Paul, in the conviction that right and truth and God claim loyalty to conscience, and that the Eternal takes into His keeping those who witness for Him, than it is to affirm adherence to all the creeds of all the churches. It was that faith that was in Paul when, clad in the gladiator's garb, he fought with beasts at Ephesus; and it is the same faith in the things unseen and eternal that must be in us, if, at the soul of us, we are to be absolutely real, intrinsically sincere.

Let then the 'better resurrection' solace you for the lives whose sun went down while it was yet day—the careers that began in fine promise and have gone out in darkness. They have not *arrived here;* but they are for ever with the Lord, and they will arrive. Bring immortality into your life. Take long views. Infancy prepares for childhood, childhood for youth, youth for manhood, and all for eternity. Plan your life on that scale; the 'things unseen' are the real things. Fight for faith in the 'better resurrection.' Struggle to keep it strong. It is precious beyond estimate. Do not let it slip from you; you are the children of the Eternal. Trust the risen and ruling Redeemer. Because He lives, you shall live also.

The Epic of Failure.

Heb. xi. 38.—'Of whom the world was not worthy.'

THE eleventh chapter of Hebrews is the most audacious of all poems—it is the epic of failure. Other poets have recited the conquests of their legendary heroes; it was reserved for the poet of faith to recite an ode, not less magnificent, in honour of heroes all foiled and fallen. That is the way of the Bible. The Bible is the literary voice of a religion which glorifies the base things of the world, which chooses the foolish things, which exalts things abased, which elects men humble and contrite, men rejected and despised; which summons to the place of honour those who have been the laughing-stock of a blind and carnal age. That is what gives the Bible its unchallenged supremacy in a world where most men sorrow and all men sin. That is why the Bible is the comforter of the weary and heavy-laden, the inspiration of all hope-blasted and heart-broken victims of life's illusions.

An epic of failure! The men and their defeat he sings—this poet standing under the shadow of the thorn-crowned One—as the fabled nightingale sings with its breast against a thorn. Abraham,

Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, he sings—men who set out to conquer and to possess a country, and ended mere aliens and wanderers, owners of hardly enough land to dig themselves a grave! Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, he sings—men who strove in their strong agony to build up a kingdom that should endure for ever; and behold, at the last, only the fast-fleeting shadow of a kingdom! The great cloud of nameless witnesses he sings—men who stood for God and the right in the teeth of perverse generations, only to perish in their own blood, leaving the name of God still blasphemed, and the wrong still unrighted! We await some inspired poet-prophet of these later days to add to the roll those heroes of the New Covenant who set out to welcome the coming Kingdom of the Christ, and fell only upon disappointment and torture and death! All hail to these baffled and beaten heroes! Honour to the long line of witnesses, stretching like a chain of light across the gulf of history, who, as seeing the invisible, endured 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune'; who made for the far ideals while others worshipped gods of clay; who died by the hands of the very men they lived for; who were despised and rejected of that world whose greatest honour it was to hold such heroes, and whose greatest disgrace it was that it got rid of them as expeditiously as it could!

1. There are men who fail for no other reason than that they are flabby and invertebrate sluggards, or waste their energies on aims that are low and unworthy and perishable. These are better forgotten. The charity of God has ordained that they pass quickly out of human memory. No; the Failures of Faith, the Defeats of Calvary, which the Lord will have in everlasting remembrance, arise from

> The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard.

Here are certain lines of Whitman, conceived, surely, in the very spirit of the epic of faith, though to the ears of those who have not learned the meaning of the Cross, they sound like the mouthings of a magnificent maniac.

> With music strong I come, with my cornets and my drums,
> I play not marches for accepted victors only,
> I play marches for conquered and slain persons.
>
> Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?
> I also say it is good to fall, battles are lost in the same spirit in which they are won.
>
> I beat and pound for the dead,
> I blow through my embouchures my loudest and gayest for them.
>
> Vivas to those who have fail'd!
> And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea!
> And to those themselves who sank in the sea!
>
> And to all generals that lost engagements, and all overcome heroes!
> And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest heroes known!
>
> Did we think victory great?
> So it is—but now it seems to me . . . that defeat is great,
> And that death and dismay are great.

2. Before you sneer at any man as a 'failure' be sure you inquire whether the conditions of success were not then absent; or worse, whether the world, snarling at all noble enterprise, was not too strong for him. Fools sneer when wise men err! Dogs bark when princes become beggars. An ass may kill a lion with a well-aimed kick. Before you scornfully label any man 'failure,' call to mind some of history's divinest defeats—Socrates, hemlock-cup in hand; Paul of Tarsus in Nero's dungeon; Jesus Christ on the cross! Nothing is more tragic than the way society sometimes arrays its forces against daring and aspiring youth. It is an envious and a jealous world. And not unseldom death overtakes a brave young soul before he has fought his way to victory. So it was with that Italian painter who, reduced to painting shop-signs for a livelihood, died by the roadside, of starvation and a broken heart. After his death men woke up to find that an artist had been among them. The greatest men live, and may sometimes die, in obscurity and want. There are few to honour them while they live, as few to mourn them when they are dead. What does the world care for its dead heroes! Is not a living dog better than a dead lion? What has he done? or, more generally, How much has he left? are

the questions which determine one's place in the esteem of one's contemporaries. What matter that his Divine knowledge broke the heart of him in pushing its way out into actual life? What matter that his glowing thought burned out the poor brain of him in striving for translation into deed and fact? Society neither knows nor cares that its strong foundations are built upon the broken hearts and burnt-out brains of its dead heroes. It is just

One moth the more
Singed in the candle at a summer's end.

Spanning the river Tay, a strong and stately viaduct successfully defies all pressure of wind and wave, bearing, in all weathers, mighty engines with living freights from shore to shore. Yet it is built upon a past failure! About forty years ago another structure stood in its place; it was at once a thing of beauty to the eye and of profit to the shareholder. The engineer was honest and capable, and was knighted for his pains. But it fell before the strong winds of a night; and with it fell, not only fourscore human beings, but the reputation, and, alas! the reason, of its constructor. Shall we upbraid and despise him? Say, rather, shall we not praise him who, first of the whole race of men, attempted a design so vast, and built the longest bridge in the world! Other engineers came after him. They improved upon his ideas. They profited by his defects. They learned from his mistakes. The result is a bridge which seems good for the service of many generations. Vivas to those who have failed! The Tay Bridge was built not alone by the successful men who reaped the subsequent rewards; it was built also upon the souls of the nameless workmen who perished in its construction, and upon the soul and mind of poor, demented Sir Thomas Bouch.

3. Humanity might have prospered fairly well without its successes, but could have progressed no jot or tittle without its defeats. Having regard to the conditions of human life, it is plain that defeat is not less essential than victory. Misdirection and error prepare the way for solid and enduring good. Failure? Let us not breathe the word in connection with any honest effort! Let us not so insult the memory of the baffled brave. No true ideal is finally dishonoured; no true effort is wasted; no true worker wholly perishes. From his loss humanity achieves a greater gain. Our future is built upon his past. He himself may perish, Moses-like, upon some lonely Nebo, but we pass over into the promised land. He may be drowned in deep gulfs of ruin and disappointment, but his soul flames out a friendly beacon through the storms of history, and future generations steer in safer channels and on more prosperous argosies. He may be beaten down by the envious fists of a world ever jealous of and murderous to its true heroes, but his soul will go marching on in the enkindled heroisms of those who come after.

Failed! 'Ah yes, poor fellow,' you say,
'Nothing from Life he seemed to gain,
His was truly a losing fight,
And all too soon the cruel Night
Closed around—beat him down, he was slain,
Yes, failed,' you say.

Failed! But I tell you, tell you, nay;
'Twas a bold fight he fought and well,
With courage held high and brow clear,
No skulking craven in the rear,
And if vanquished, 'twere fighting he fell;
No failure, I say.

And look you, what call you Success?
The shrill plaudits of some few men—
A palace reared high from the cold,
A red heap of this earth-dug gold,
A Cathedral crypt, and then, what then?
—Why, only a guess.

And I say again count you the cost
Of this Bridge; to what is it nailed?
What are its bulwarks piled high, these
You cross to your city of ease?
Man, I tell you 'tis built on the failed,
The fighters who lost.

And he, scorn or pity as you will,
'Twas in fording that stream he fell,
'For freedom, for man, for the right,'
Were his cry in the heat of the fight,
And for these—and for you, rang his knell.
Then 'failed' say you still?

Dry-shod reach your Promised Land now
On his failure: on those the world railed—
They, the stuff of what heroes are,

Who saw its lights gleam from valleys afar,
And fought for it, died for it, failed—
No failure, I vow! [1]

¶ Korning was one of the truest men I ever knew; if anything, he had too tender a heart; and he was as fearless as a lion. I knew him better than ever his mother has done, and whenever I heard a word against him I never failed to get in the last say. He and I had been at school and through the shops together: we had attended the Vicar's classes; and we had gone through a nonconformist phase of 'conversion' together after that. Ned was first and I followed him. That was after we had played the devil for a year or two, when the world had got hold of us as it does, I fear, of most. There was a sympathy between us that I can't describe. Then he went over to the States to teach them how to use a motor cycle. They knew pretty well, but Ned Korning knew better. His record was an open one to all who cared to look, and there wasn't any difficulty put in the way when he applied for a despatch rider's job.

His main trouble was his sensitiveness. He had passed through religious experiences that some whose eyes never look above the horizontal call 'hysteria.' But it wasn't hysteria or anything like it. I watched him all the time, and I have even cried at night in bed in my anxiety for him. When he was in the States he wrote to me twice a week, and it was always the same tale, that he was the most unhappy wretch alive, and that he couldn't find what he was searching for. Then the war broke out, and, suddenly, he found it!

He became another man. His being underwent a change as marked as the transformation from chrysalis to butterfly, and I looked on, fairly amazed, for he had found something higher and sweeter than anything I had ever known, or heard of.

We went out together with the —— Division. We were in and through the awful agony of the great retreat; and we were together in the flushing excitement of the sudden reflex of advance. We rarely had a billet; it was a most racking life, but we stood it better than did our machines! One night, one great and glorious night, we had together. We were in a barn and as comfortable on the straw as in the featheriest bed at home. It was then that he opened his heart out to me. I couldn't dare to put on paper an account of that night's talk, I can only sum it up in this, that Ned had found what his heart had longed for through the years, the meaning and the glory of—The Sacrifice!

Next morning he had to take a despatch to Ypres—a tremendously urgent one. The road through Bailleul was safe enough, but he decided for the shorter Kemmel road. He didn't stop to think, but just decided and was off.

He should have been back by eleven o'clock, but midday passed and one o'clock and two, and yet never a word of him came through. Rumours, however, came that made me anxious. They said that a large body of German cavalry had been through in the night and that they had only just been driven back. They wanted Kemmel hill again; they were wild at having let it fall into our hands. We had held it for two days, and this was another desperate bid for it, but it had failed.

I got the next despatch and off I dashed, up through Neuve Eglise and down the steep narrow street, and then up through the lovely little village of Kemmel itself. Then in the ditch I saw a Triumph motor bike. I pulled up suddenly. I saw its number. It was Ned Korning's motor bike.

I closed his eyes, and knelt beside him. I opened his jacket and vest and took off his identity disc. That was all they had left him. I knelt a minute and cried. My tears fell on his face, and I wiped them off and kissed his cold forehead.

Had he failed? [1]

[1] A. H. Begbie.

God's Work crowned by Christians.

Heb. xi. 39, 40.—'These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without (RV 'apart from') us should not be made perfect.'

It is a good thing at times to reflect upon the audacity of the claims that are made in the New Testament. Here is a writer sending a message of encouragement to a small sect who had separated themselves from the Jews through their faith in Jesus. They had cut themselves adrift from

[1] L. L., *The Sacrament*, 102.

the great traditions of their nation, and this writer has taken them through their history, and recalled all the mighty heroes of the past, as a teacher might take a class of boys to-day through the National Portrait Gallery and show them the men who have built this nation. So he takes them through this 'portrait gallery,' shows to them the builders of that national temple from which they thought they were cut away. It seems as if the argument should be: 'These are the heroes, and you are leaving them; they are the men who have made you, and you are apostates from them.' It seems as if he should have said: 'You need them. You cannot do without them, without their power, their example, their inspiration.' What he does say is, 'They need you. Without you they would not be made perfect. You have something they longed to have and never received. You have the promise to which they stretched out their hands in longing, in faith and in hope, and which they never found.'

Words like these are not alone in the New Testament, and yet if we think about them for a moment they are very strange and very wonderful. That, in point of time, a few Hebrews should dare to claim that they had in their hands the treasure for which the world had waited, the treasure which the world would never exhaust; that they were living in the last days of the world, the last spiritual stage of mankind! Yet to us who can look back over all these centuries, the boast has been justified, and let us include in that word 'us' not only those who lived at that time, but all the Christian ages. We are one in the spiritual truth which we possess, in the power which is given to us. We have not outgrown their Christ after all these years, and it can be said of us, as it could be said of them, that we hold in our keeping the treasure that men longed to find and did not find.

1. Obviously, it is true that all these saints, prophets, and heroes had been waiting for something, that there had been a growth towards something, a development in the history of Israel, a development that was leading somewhere. There are people to-day who talk vaguely of 'progress' without any attempt to understand the thing before them towards which they may make progress. This writer maintains that all the saints, heroes, friends of God were waiting, incomplete, until something should come. That something, he says, is yours. They longed for it; you have it. Apart from *you,* they cannot be made perfect.

It is not as if these men were moving towards a new principle; they were always men of faith. But it was the crowning word that they needed, and this crowning word had come in Jesus Christ. It was the mighty act of God that they waited for, and the mighty act of God had been wrought in Jesus Christ. As we read the Old Testament, we cannot but be conscious that there is a sort of expectancy about it, an air of incompleteness. They are waiting. Sometimes as we read it seems as if they had reached the very limit, and could almost stretch out their hands and touch the Cross of Christ. And yet they do not take that last step. In the Book of Job and in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah you are very near to the Cross of Christ. One step more and you will be there; but you are not quite there. The author is still waiting for the final word of God in Christ Jesus. And the picture here is given of this mighty cloud of witnesses looking on at the race, not simply to cheer you and me on, but waiting for us to come, waiting for *our* work to be done, that *their* work may be completed. They wait for the revelation of the sons of God. The Apostle Paul, in a great and somewhat difficult passage, represents not only mankind, but all created things, as waiting for something—waiting for the revelation of the sons of God.

2. The truth of the New Testament is that that for which they waited has come. It is here, now, always, for ever. It is not simply the Apostles who claimed that; it is our Lord Himself. After praising John the Baptist, He said: 'Greatest of those that have passed; no prophet has been greater than he, but he that is but little in the kingdom of God is greater than he.' In the Gospels Christ spoke with the air of one who is bringing in the final age of mankind. That truth has been brought home to us in our day amidst a great many errors, by those who lay stress upon the teaching of Christ concerning the final things, upon what at the heart of it is but this—that the Apostles believed that they were living in the last age. You can interpret that in

terms of time, if you like, but you need not. They *were* living in the last age. We are living in the same age—the age of Jesus Christ. It was the last age. If they thought the end was nearer than it has proved to be, it does not affect the main truth of their claim. Nothing between them and the end but Christ. There is nothing between us and the end—whenever that end may come—but Christ. 'Apart from us'—because we have found the one word for which they longed; we have taken that one step; we have come into the kingdom of which they dreamed, for which they looked and which they never saw. We have entered into it.

¶ There are three steps in the Santa Scala which the Race is slowly and painfully ascending: barbarism, where men cultivate the body, civilisation, where they cultivate the intellect, holiness, where they cultivate the soul. There is for the whole race, for each nation, for every individual, the age of Homer, the age of Socrates, the age of Jesus. Beyond the age of Jesus nothing can be desired or imagined, for it runs on those lofty table-lands where the soul lives with God.[1]

Do we really believe that we find Christ the final word of God—the great Redeemer—to His own age and to the end? If it were simply that Christ came to teach a new philosophy, we could not look back to any one point in time for that. But what Christ was and what He did was more than what He said. What He said was an application of great truth to the immediate need of the moment, and we can interpret that in our own way and to meet our own needs. What Christ did was to create a new life, to bring a new birth to men, to bring a new order of beings, to lift them into His resurrection life, where they lived on another plane, where now, here, the Kingdom of God could be enjoyed and His power could be used. It was for that reason that they said, 'We live in the last days, in the last age, and there is nothing between us and the end but Christ. He is all-sufficient for us, and He will be all-sufficient for all men. Apart from us they cannot be made perfect, for we have found the one redeeming act of God and made it our own.'

¶ Archbishop Temple writes: 'Our Lord is the crown, nay, the very substance of all Revelation. If He cannot convince the soul, no other can. The believer stakes all faith on His truth; all hope on His power. If the man of Science would learn what it is that makes believers so sure of what they hold, he must study with an open heart the Jesus of the Gospels; if the believer seeks to keep his faith steady in the presence of so many and sometimes so violent storms of disputation, he will read of, ponder on, pray to, the Lord Jesus Christ.'[1]

(1) There are several burdens that lie upon us when we realize this fact. The first is that we are, whether we like it or not, called to be the trustees of God's final word to mankind in Christ Jesus. We have this given into our trust, and we must keep it. We shall never escape from it, however much we may try to do so; and with all the difficulty and apparent inequality of it we have to stand for this great truth, that God has entrusted to us a place in the story of the world such as He did not give to the prophets of the world before Christ, that to us is given the task to complete the work they began, and that without us they can never be made perfect. When you read of the cloud of witnesses around you, think of them as a cloud of witnesses waiting still until God's purposes have been fulfilled in this world.

(2) Then there comes the almost intolerable sense of sin in our hearts when we think of these things. Somehow we allow anything to come in between us and our calling in Christ Jesus—any of the passing things of the world we allow to rob us of the highest dignity that God ever gave to men, to rob us of it in such a fashion that it seems incredible to us. What sort of men should we be if we really believed that for us the end of the earth had come and that we had in our possession God's great last word, that we were living in the last spiritual stage of mankind? Then Christ's voice says to us in our weakness and insufficiency, 'Thy strength can still be made perfect in weakness. I have called age after age since the day of My flesh to enter into this inheritance, and they have all refused it, and now I come to you. Will you also fail Me?' That is what Christ is saying to us in our generation. 'Will you also go away?' There is only one answer that the Christian heart can make. The

[1] Ian Maclaren.

[1] *Bampton Lectures*: '*The Relation between Religion and Science*, 251.

task is impossible, the dignity is one of which we are utterly unworthy. The claim is almost ridiculous in the sight of all men. But I have it on the word of Christ. I believe it, and by His grace I will live for it. He says to us, 'Will you also go away? You of this generation, you can offer to Me the thing that I have longed for. Will you also go away?' We say, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.'

The Cloud of Witnesses.

Heb. xii. 1.—'Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.'

Does the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews set his seal upon the idea that the dead behold the living; that they who have fought and conquered in their day watch us who are waging the same spiritual warfare in ours? The English translation might be quoted to prove as much. Our word 'witness' is popularly used to denote one who beholds an act—as identical with the word 'spectator.' That it is not identical is evident from our possession of the compound word 'eye-witness.' The Greek in the text is wholly distinct. It expresses not one who beholds, but one who testifies to a truth or fact. Thus the sense in English might be employed to prove that the dead are spectators of our actions. The sense in the Greek could not be so used. It is, doubtless, a magnificent incitement to zeal which lies in the thought of martyrs and confessors, prophets and kings, gazing down upon us from the height. The inspired writer just avoids giving distinct authority to the conception. He has placed himself in the arena. He has evoked about him on every side a shadowy multitude; but when you expect the word *epoptai* to follow, he suddenly turns aside and substitutes the word *martures*. 'Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud,' not of spectators, but 'of witnesses'—of testifiers to the truth which we believe and the principles on which we are to act. The lesson derived from the word 'witnesses,' strictly understood, is not less valuable, if it be less thrilling, than that involved in the notion of bygone generations taking note how we fight the good fight of faith.

The witnesses, then, of whom the writer speaks are the persons mentioned in the immediately preceding narrative; and when these are characterized as 'a cloud of witnesses,' the author does not intend to imply that these witnesses are present as *spectators* at the contest to be maintained by his readers, but he represents them as persons who have borne testimony for the faith which he demands of his readers, and who, consequently, have become models for imitation to the readers as regards this virtue.

We understand the sense in which these heroes of the faith which the previous chapter has marshalled in a glorious bederoll are called 'witnesses,' when we observe the frequent occurrence of the word, and its cognate words, in that chapter. We read there, for instance, that the elders 'had witness borne to them,' that Abel, by the acceptance of his sacrifices, 'had witness borne to him that he was righteous,' 'God bearing witness in respect of his gifts;' that Enoch 'had witness borne to him that he had been well pleasing unto God; and that the whole illustrious succession 'had witness borne to them through their faith.' This witness borne to them by God is, of course, His giving to them the blessings which belong to a genuine faith, whether of conscious acceptance with God, or of inward peace and power, or of outward victory over sorrows and foes. But they become witnesses to us for God by the very same facts by which He makes Himself the witness of their faith; for they therein become proofs of the blessedness of true religion, visible evidences of God's faithfulness, and their histories shine out across the centuries, testifying to us in our toils how good it is to trust in the Lord, and how small and transient are the troubles and hindrances that a life of faith meets. The calm stars declare the glory of God, and witness from age to age of His power which keeps them every one from failing; and these bright names that shine in the heaven of His word proclaim His tender pity, and His rewarding love to all who, like them, fight the good fight. Like the innumerable suns that make up the Milky Way, they melt into one bright cloud that lies still and eternal above our heads and sheds a radiance on our dim struggles. So we have here brought out the stimulus to our Christian race from the faith and blessedness of these saints.

1. They witness to us how mighty and Divine a thing is a life of faith. Their human weakness

was filled with the power of God. Tremblings and self-distrust and all the ills that flesh is heir to dwelt in them. Black doubts and sore conflicts were their portion. They, too, knew what we know—how hard it is to live and do the right. But they fought through, because a mightier hand was upon them, and God's grace was breathed into their weakness; and there they stand, victorious witnesses to us that whosoever will put his trust in the Lord shall have strength according to his need inbreathed into his uttermost weakness, and shall have by his side in every furnace One like unto the Son of Man. They witness to us of companions in suffering, and the thought of them may come to a lonely heart wading in dark, deep waters, with the assurance that there is a ford, and that others have known the icy cold, and the downward rush of the stream, and have not been carried away by it. It is not a selfish thought that sometimes brings encouragement to a solitary sufferer—'the same afflictions have been accomplished in your brethren.' It helps us to remember the great multitude who before us have come through the great tribulation and are before the throne. The cloud of witnesses testify how impotent is sorrow to harm, how strong to bless, those who put their trust in God.

¶ Professor F. G. Peabody makes a special and impressive use of this text in addressing the students of Harvard University at the opening of the session. 'No one,' he says, 'can look for the first time into the faces of a congregation like this without thinking, first of all, of the great multitude of other lives whose love and sacrifice are represented here. Almost every single life which enters our chapel is the focus of interest for a whole domestic circle, whose prayers and anxieties, whose hopes and ambitions, are turning toward this place from every region of this land. Out from behind our congregation stands in the background a cloud of witnesses in whose presence we meet. There are the fathers, earning and saving that the sons may have a better chance than they; there are the mothers, with their prayers and sacrifices; there are the rich parents, trembling lest wealth may be a snare to their sons; and the humble homes with their daily deeds of self-denial for the sake of the boys who come to us here. When we meet in this chapel we are never alone. We are the centre of a great company of observant hearts. And then, behind us all, there is the still larger fellowship of the past, the historic traditions of the university, the men who have adorned it, the inheritances into which we freely enter, the witnesses of a long and honourable associated life.' [1]

2. They witness to us of the faithfulness of God, who has led them, and upheld them, through all their conflicts, and has brought them to His side at last. That wondrous power avails for us, fresh and young, as when it helped the world's grey fathers. God refers us to their experiences, and summons them as His witnesses, for they will speak good of His name, and each of them, as they bend down from their seats around the arena, calls to us, 'O love the Lord, all ye his saints. I was brought low, and he helped me.' So that we, taking heart by their example, can set ourselves to our struggles with the peaceful confidence, 'This God is our God for ever and ever.'

¶ I like to think of those Scandinavian veterans who, when a young recruit was buckling on his armour for the first time, took him to the halls of his ancestors. As he gazed at one rugged old face after another, some scarred laureate would recite the exploits of those heroic forefathers. And as the youth heard story after story of splendid sacrifice and doughty deed, he would feel his soul glow with intense desire to prove himself worthy of so valiant a descent. In his *Venetia,* Lord Beaconsfield, too, tells of the old tutor who, having completed the education of a young heir to a noble house, took him, before parting from him, to the picture-gallery of the castle. Then, having told his pupil of the virtues that had distinguished all his line, he implored him to acquit himself as a worthy son of such worthy sires.

Napoleon knew what he was doing when, in his Egyptian campaign, he pointed to the Pyramids and cried, 'Soldiers, forty centuries look down upon you!' It must be a sluggish soul that cannot respond to such an appeal. [2]

Social Christianity.

Heb. xii. 1.—'We are compassed about.'

EVERY student of the past history of religion knows well the value of loneliness to the spiritual life.

[1] *Mornings in the College Chapel,* 1st ser., 1.

[2] F. W. Boreham, *The Other Side of the Hill,* 194.

The greatest essential of our faith and of our religious life is sincerity, without which no man can ever see the Lord, or look upon the face of his fellow. But sincerity is difficult, because eyes are always on us; and, without knowing it, we come into the habit of playing to our audience, and living, not straight to God and straight to conscience, but under the eyes and the criticism of our fellow-men. This consciousness often spoils everything. One admires and envies the austere strength of the lonely soul who cares not who may overlook his solitude, whose heart is a hermitage in which he dwells alone, and who says to all the world, Keep thou thy place; I am here in mine.

1. But after all that is said—and very much more might be said—there is something inhuman about that self-dependence. The normal condition for our human nature is social. Our living friends count for much, whether we will or no. The very effort to banish the thought of them and to live without them will distort and to some extent strain our nature. And besides living friends, we are accompanied by a great cloud of unseen presences. Ancestors of the race, who have laid down their task long ago, and who live in us still, spirits of the dead,—the beloved dead, that are not far away, and we know it—saints and angels, and the great company of the unseen, crowd around every earnest spirit. These are with us indeed.

This companionable instinct is entirely wholesome. The ministry of Jesus Christ Himself was full of friends, and in the open air. It was not from Him that Christianity ever learned to be recluse, that it became a secretive thing, neurotic, and, as it were, illicit. The disease of solitude that devastated the Church at times, and still attacks it, never came from Him, for He met men in the open, face to face, and lived among them in the crowd, and let the jostle and pressure of this world's life be continually upon Him while He kept the solitude of His soul inviolate.

There are some to-day who seek to cultivate a private religious life, who would depreciate the value and influence of the public gathering of men and women who believe, who find no need for sacrament or church fellowship, and tell you they can be as good Christians without these as with them. Frankly, we do not think they can. As genuine Christians they may indeed be; God forbid that we should judge them. But as wholesome, as rich in experience, as secure in the hour of temptation, they cannot be.

2. There is no real solitude anywhere. You may retreat, but it will only be to some new company of witnesses. Some of you, it may be, have grown morbid, and imagine you are alone in this difficult and cross-grained world. Your experience is like that of nobody else, and you have shrunk back from the familiarity of friends and the society of men. But you are not alone. There is no peculiar experience that makes you one whit more interesting than others. After all is said, yours is but a common lot, and, if you had only the heart to know it and eyes to see it, you would know that round you there is a multitude in like case. If you only knew, there are hundreds of men and women more handicapped for evil than you are, less buttressed with all the helps of honour and loyalty than you have been; people who have less between them and temptation than you have, and who unselfishly and honourably are fighting a better battle. You are not alone in the most tempted hour; and you who are hard pressed at some lonely outpost of faith or character, you who feel how lonely being good is, how lonely it is to live at all and to try to maintain still some witness for the things that count and are honourable, do not forget that there is for you also the good cheer of companions.

The whole camp of God is glittering with lights where sentinels just such as you are standing solitary in the darkness. Remember them—the great surrounding ring of the faithful who in quiet places bear true witness to the best—and when next you are tempted to repine at your hard-pressed and lonely outpost, thank God that you are one of many such.

3. But let us look at the crowd that surrounds us, and first of all at the general crowd, not particularly friendly to us.

(1) There are a vast number of people watching our lives more or less interestedly who are not in the slightest degree caring whether we succeed or fail. The eyes of multitudes of the indifferent are upon every one of us. They are looking on, mere spectators, watching one little part of the

show, and you and I do not count for any more than marionettes in that. Well, let us accept the challenge. Who ever heard of a day in the Kingdom of God when the only condition on which men and women could be true and noble in the Christian life was that there were people who cared, besides God and themselves? Surely w do not want everybody to be bending their eyes over us. Surely we shall not make it a condition that the world shall back us and be eager for our success before we shall stand and bear our witness! Nay, but think of the stimulus of alien eyes. Think of the value to the brave spirit of the very coldness of the world. Think of the challenge to all that is in us to force an interest where there is no interest as yet. It is that way and not otherwise that the Kingdom of God has advanced in days gone by. In no great day of it has the Kingdom of God waited for, or depended upon, already existing interest. Never has it waited for the sympathy that was coming to it from others. It has set itself from the first to force, to create these, to wring them from a reluctant world, and by doing that it has lived and succeeded.

(2) But, besides these, there are actually hostile witnesses, no doubt, around many of your lives—people in your homes, or your places of business, or meeting with you in the street, who are lying on the watch for your stumbling. They dislike you, and want to see you fail. Some critics live in a smaller world than we do, and do not understand the scale upon which we are living and thinking. Others live merely in a different world—it may be greater, because their world is not necessarily smaller if they dislike you and me. After all, our enemies are not necessarily such desperate characters as we sometimes think. They may be quite as good as we are; we may have much to learn from them. But the table of all of us is spread in the presence of enemies who continually watch for our failure. Why should we not again accept the challenge? Let them watch. There will come into life a bracing sense of duty to be done, and the whole business of being a Christian will take on a new reality and force and vital energy. That is the sort of spirit that made the great men of Scotland in the past, when 'they wore wounds like roses,' and in their manhood died.

(3) But, besides these, there are the friendly witnesses of our life. Faith is good, and faithfulness may be heroic, and in the presence of onlookers who do not love us it may become brave and splendid. Yet it may be dreary, and mean loneliness. Faith cries out for love. That is the greatest thing the Christian Church and Christ Himself has given to the world. 'Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.' It is true with regard to human friends that we can dispense with praise. But few of us—very few—can afford to do without some sense of backing and appreciation. Think of the loving friends to-day who trust you and believe in you. There are fathers and mothers, some in rich homes, some in humble homes, who believe in you. Think of their self-denial, remember their prayers, the anxiety with which they sent you forth, the hopes they cherish for you still. Think of the friends who love and trust you best. Think of those whose characters are purest and simplest and truest. Think of them until they crowd the secret hours of life, the solitary times when you can think of whom you please. Dwell not among your enemies that they may make you bitter with life. Dwell among your friends.

(4) And again, there is the congregation of the dead—some beloved ones whose memory is very dear to us. The friendly dead, watching from their silent places are counting on you and me to bring on their lives and perfect them.

Our Mothers, lovely women pitiful;
Our Sisters, gracious in their life and death;
To us each unforgotten memory saith:
'Learn as we learned in life's sufficient school,
Work as we worked in patience of our rule,
Walk as we walked, much less by sight than faith,
Hope as we hoped, despite our slips and scathe,
Fearful in joy and confident in dule.' [1]

And behind these the past generations, into whose inheritance we have entered, are watching and counting upon us also. They all laid down their lives unfinished; many of their dreams and ideals were never brought to realization. We are not beginning things, only carrying them on. If to-day we are not at the same point of view in all details as our fathers, if the world has widened around us

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

and its horizons have swept out to include men and things excluded by them, still, behind us, like a great conscience, is that noble history which has passed itself on unfinished into our hands, and will be, to some extent, meaningless unless we find opportunity rightly to complete it.

(5) And, above all else, there is God Himself looking down from heaven and viewing the children of men as both Critic and Friend. Critic, for His eyes behold the children of men, and we do our work ever under that great Taskmaster's eyes. Aye, but this is the best witness of all: He is the lover of our souls, who trusts us even more than our dearest dare to trust us. He watches, ready to say upon each endeavour after His will, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'

God the Father is waiting to-day to see the harvest of His creation, the seed of which was sown in fire and slime long before the earth was formed, sown in blood and tears in the early savageries out of which our civilization came. He is waiting for you and me to bring to completeness that which He has so marvellously begun. God the Son is waiting; Jesus Christ, tenderest, saddest, most gloriously exalted, is waiting on His Cross still, waiting to see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. The Holy Ghost is waiting. Are there not wonderful things in the air to-day—new vitalities, the promise of greater things in the future, great causes, great movements? The Holy Spirit waits for faithful men to meet these great opportunities, and to send on the noblest things in the noblest form to the generations that are to come.[1]

Weights.

Heb. xii. 1.—'Let us lay aside every weight.'

In the study of human careers we frequently meet instances where the promise of a splendid success has been cut off by some minor defect, either in the constitution or in the character. The endowments are rare in breadth, in energy, and in genius; but that single flaw reduces the product of the whole to mediocrity.

1. The flaw may not be a sin; it may be only a weight. For there are hindrances which are not sins. The distinction which the writer draws is a very important one. Sin is that which, by its very nature, in all circumstances, by whomsoever done, without regard to consequences, is a transgression of God's law. A 'weight' is that which, allowable in itself, legitimate, perhaps a blessing, the exercise of a power which God has given us, is, for some reason, a hindrance and impediment in *our* running the race. The one word describes the action or habit by its inmost essence, the other describes it by its accidental consequences. Sin is sin, whosoever does it; but weights may be weights to me, and not weights to you. Sin is sin in whatever degree it is done; but weights may be weights when they are in excess, and helps, not hindrances, when they are in moderation. The one is a legitimate thing turned to a false use; the other is always, and everywhere, and by whomsoever performed, a transgression of God's law.

That this is also the teaching of our Lord is evident from some of His memorable sayings: 'If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off'; 'If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out.' Is there anything sinful in the hand and eye? Are they not instruments and avenues of blessing? Of all the gifts that man has had from heaven there are few that can be matched with hand or eye. In the right hand has waved the sword of freedom. In the right hand has been grasped the pen of genius. By the right hand is wrought that common toil that sets a hundred temptations at defiance—yet 'if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off; if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out.' Do not misinterpret that deep word of Jesus. He spoke as a poet speaks, who through the concrete has visions of abstract and universal truth. He meant that even the choicest of our blessings may be so twisted and turned into a snare that a man may have to say, 'This is a weight for me,' and, with swiftness of farewell, lay it aside.

It is an awful and mysterious power that which we all possess, of perverting the highest God-given endowments, whether of soul or of circumstance, into occasions for faltering, and falling back in the Divine life. Just as men, by devilish ingenuity, can distil poison out of God's fairest flowers, so can we do with everything that we have, with all the richest treasures of our nature—with the hearts which He has given us, that we may love Him; with the understandings which He has bestowed upon us, that we may apprehend His Divine truth and His wonderful counsel;

[1] J. Kelman, in *The Presbyterian*, Dec. 12, 1912.

with these powers of work which He has conferred upon us, that by them we may bring to Him acceptable service and fitting offering; with the gladness and grace with which He surrounds our life, intending that out of it we should draw ever occasions for thankfulness, reasons for trust, helps towards God. And because we cleave to these things, not only in a wrong degree but in a wrong manner, we may make them all hindrances.

So, for instance, in a very awful sense is fulfilled that threatening, 'A man's foes shall be they of his own household,' when we make those whom we love best our idols, not because we love them too well, but because we love them apart from God; when instead of drawing from those who are dear to us—our husbands, and wives, and children, and parents, and friends, and every other tender name—lessons of God's infinite goodness, and reasons why our hearts should flow perpetually with love to Him, we stay with them, and hang back from God, and forget that His love is best, His heart deepest, and His sufficiency our safest trust. That is one single instance; and as it is in that sacredest of regions, so is it in all others. Every blessing, every gladness, every possession external to us, and every faculty and attribute within us, we turn into heavy weights that drag us down to this low spot of earth. We make them all sharp knives with which we clip the wings of our heavenward tendencies, and then we grovel in the dust.

2. But the weight may be some personal weakness.

(1) It may be resentment, or suspicion, or prejudice in relation to others. You may have got somebody on your nerves. You may be cherishing the memory of an imaginary or real slight, some jealousy or envy of somebody else. It is simply spoiling your running, taking the heart out of you for your duty. Lay it aside; ask God to help you to forget it. Perhaps the person you are thinking of is as unjust and undeserving as you think, but all your chafing of spirit will not change him. It will change you. It will turn you into a person with a grievance, which generally means a person who is a plague to himself and to everybody else. The burden of illwill towards anybody is one that will prevent you from running your race, and that is too heavy for you to carry.

(2) Or the weight that some people need to lay aside is made up of dignity and self-importance. While they are debating whether their dignity will allow a certain thing without its suffering too great a shock, somebody runs past them. A person who has to consider at every turn whether he can do this or that compatibly with his dignity will never win the race.

(3) And our successful running may be spoilt by over-anxiety. Over-anxiety about succeeding spoils the candidate in many an examination; it ruins the competitor in many a contest. Supreme anxiety to be first sometimes defeats its own ends, and puts the competitor last. There is such a thing as over-carefulness, a consuming desire to excel, which lands its possessor in an agitation unfitting him for the best performance of his duty. If we could only leave things in God's hands, and go to them with even a dash of carelessness as to the final result, so that we did our best, it would be a great help to the best performance of our tasks.

¶ Out of the midst of a great pressure of work, with a body tired out, Dr Charles F. Deems, the busy pastor of The Church of The Strangers in New York City, wrote these lines years ago:

The world is wide,
In time and tide,
And God is quick;
Then *do not hurry.*

That man is blest,
Who *does his best,*
And *leaves* the rest;
Then *do not worry.*

(4) One other thing may spoil us unless it be laid aside—discontent, chafing against certain elements in our circumstances, elements which fret and irritate us. Well, there is something in all our circumstances which we cannot alter, and which, perhaps, cannot be altered. You cannot adapt your circumstances to yourself, they are too stubborn; you cannot manipulate them as you can manipulate figures in an argument. But you can adapt yourself to your circumstances. You cannot broaden the gateway, but you can adjust your burden so that it will admit you, and that is the only way to peace.

¶ Was there ever a better example of discontent

than Carlyle? Though he had fame and honour and troops of friends and a great career before him he often found existence intolerable. He was fond of telling the following story of an Irish corporal, feeling perhaps how well it fitted himself. Writing to his friend Sterling, he said: 'How often do I, poor wretch, from amid this inane whirlpool which seems to be grinding my life to pieces, cry aloud for a hut in the wilderness, with fields round me and sky over me, that on any terms, consistent with life at all, I might be allowed to live there! Nay, perhaps, *I shall verily fly to Craigenputtock again before long.* Yet I know what solitude is, and imprisonment among black cattle and peat bogs. The truth is, we are never right as we are. 'Oh, the devil burn it!' said the Irish drummer flogging his countryman; 'there's no pleasing of you, strike where one will.' [1]

3. The question that now presses for an answer is this: Is it possible to shake ourselves free of everything that impedes our steps? It is well for us to weigh the exact expression of the text. It is not, 'Let us take care not to acquire the weight': it is supposed that we have it; and yet the writer urges, 'Let us lay it aside.' This means that we may get rid of it at once, for the words 'lay it aside' represent a single act; not the last and crowning act of many preceding efforts, but the immediate execution of the will. Of course, if we adopt the ordinary estimate of human power, we are invited to attempt that which is impossible. How can we lay aside by an immediate resolution an impediment that closely clings to us? We may rid ourselves of it by degrees; we may live it down in time. So teaches the moralist whose field of study is human nature, whose hope is placed upon the resources of human nature. But the historic examples that are marshalled together in the preceding chapter, and whose illustrious fame is intended to kindle our emulation, achieved their deeds by faith. Their lives were miracles of faith, not monuments of strength, of skill, and of genius. They dared and endured and conquered as seeing Him who is not seen. They communed with a world where actions are done on another scale than that which is familiar to human experience. The members of that community live under another system of laws; things impossible to us are possible to them; and faith in the invisible God connects us with their society; for 'all things are possible to him that believeth.'

It is for this reason that the author of the Epistle, in exhorting us to perform an apparently impossible act, adopts the easy tone of absolute assurance, as if he were asking us to discharge an ordinary duty: 'Let us lay aside every weight.' Here is the secret of this singular manner of address—'looking unto Jesus.' The Old Testament heroes were mighty because they saw 'him who is invisible'; and to New Testament heroes the invisible God is *Jesus.* This passage is another proof that He and the Father are one. 'Looking unto Jesus,' everything is possible. 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me': all things necessary to be done to free my steps from entanglement—to enable me to shake off the encumbrances which make the running difficult. He had a course: what was the prize that crowned it? Bringing many sons and daughters to glory. You may imagine the sympathy with which He looks upon your efforts and struggles and dangers, by remembering that the successful finish of your race is the crown of His rejoicing.

It is through faith that all the disabilities and deprivations of life are overcome. Wordsworth knew this as he wrote:

> Shall that blest day arrive
> When they, whose choice or lot it is to dwell
> In crowded cities, without fear shall live
> Studious of mutual benefit; and he,
> When Morn awakens, among dews and flowers
> Of every clime, to till the lonely field,
> Be happy in himself?—The law of faith
> Working through love, such conquest shall it gain,
> Such triumph over sin and guilt achieve?
> Almighty Lord, thy further grace impart!
> And with that help the wonder shall be seen
> Fulfilled, the hope accomplished; and thy praise
> Be sung with transport and unceasing joy.

The Besetting Sin.

Heb. xii. 1.—'The sin which doth so easily beset us.'

THE writer does not mean one special kind of transgression when he says, 'the sin which doth so easily beset us.' He is speaking about sin

[1] J. A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle, 1834-1881*, i. 204.

generically—all manner of transgression. It is not, as we sometimes hear the words misquoted, '*that* sin which doth *most* easily beset us.' *All* sin is, according to this passage, a besetting sin. It is the characteristic of every kind of transgression that it circles us round about, that it is always lying in wait and lurking for us. The whole of it, therefore, in all its species, is to be cast aside if we would run with patience this appointed race.

But while we are here undoubtedly exhorted to lay aside all sin, sin in general, yet the passage indicates that the Hebrews addressed were exposed to a special temptation; and on this point they are exhorted to stand firm. In fact, their particular danger was that of faint-heartedness; and against the sin of backsliding they needed to be on their guard.

1. We are all subject to special sins.

(1) The *nation* has its besetting sin. Scientific observers affirm that different races of men have different kinds of weeds following in their wake, so that a careful observer can in travelling see at once, by merely noticing the prevailing weeds, whether Europeans or Asiatics, Germans, Negroes, or Indians have dwelt in certain places. And each nation seems to have its distinctive sin. The national sin of the Hebrews was avarice, of the Carthaginians perfidy, of the Greeks voluptuousness, of the Romans cruelty, of the Teutons gluttony. So in modern times the various nationalities have besetting sins arising from peculiarities of climate, constitution, government, and history.

(2) The *age* has its besetting sin. In the history of morals we find that in successive ages different vices have been in the ascendant. The various historic periods are as distinctive in their vices and crimes as they are in anything else.

(3) The *individual* has his besetting sin. John Hunter, the great physician, held that two general diseases cannot co-exist in the same individual. We can be subject only to one general disease at one time. It is somewhat thus with us morally. Speaking generally, a man at any given time is under the influence of only one evil taste or passion; and such evil predilection is common to all. One evil passion not infrequently precludes the presence of another. The love of pleasure can scarcely co-exist with the love of money; and the lust of power contradicts the passion for pleasure. One special proclivity to evil troubles us. All sins are in us seminally, sympathetically, potentially; but in a particular direction lies our special peril. This arises to a great extent from constitution. In the brain and blood are predispositions to certain forms of evil. Our surroundings also influence us. Even some trades carry with them peculiar liabilities to defect or excess. Each race, each generation, each person develops in a special direction, has a definite and characteristic weakness. We manifest our individuality in our faults as much as in anything else.

2. We must estimate our character according to our relation to the besetting sin. We sometimes flatteringly estimate our character by reckoning up the sins to which we have no inclination. We are free from all these, and really seem to have considerable reason to congratulate ourselves. We estimate our character by the inventory of the sins to which we have no bias. Fatal miscalculation! It is a maxim in mechanics that a thing is no stronger than its weakest part; a fortress is no stronger than its weakest aspect, a boiler no stronger than its weakest plate, a chain no stronger than its weakest link. We may introduce the maxim of mechanics into the moral sphere, and say that the spiritual man is no stronger than his weakest point. Let us remember this when we take stock of ourselves. How do we stand in regard to our weak points? Are we gaining or losing there? Are we overcoming our weakness, or are we being overcome by it? Never mind the strong points. How about the weak place where you are specially assailable? Are you keeping the enemy out there? What about the crazy link in the chain of your virtue—is that being forged into sounder fibre? You are as good as your worst part, and no better; as strong as your weak part, and no stronger; as safe as your most dangerous part, and no safer. Make no mistake in your estimate. If by watchfulness, prayer, and effort our weak places are being made strong and our besetting sins subdued, we may indeed rejoice; but if we perpetually fail in one point, let us be sure that that is the true index to our character, and that a score of untried virtues will not atone for the one virtue which fails whenever it is put into the fire. We are what our weakest place is.

¶ In one of his letters to his eldest son, Mr. Gladstone wrote: 'Give heed to self-examination; use it from time to time: perhaps if used at fixed periodical times, with intervals not too long between them, it will thus be most profitable. It will be of especial use in detecting, and after detection tracking, your besetting sin. When this is found, keep the eye close upon it, follow it up, drag it from its hiding-places, make no terms with it, never remit the pursuit; and so by the grace of God's Holy Spirit may you cast it out. When you have both found what was your besetting sin—that is, the sin *most easily* besetting you—and have by the same grace conquered it, then take the sin which besets you *next most easily*, and deal with it in like manner.'[1]

The Race.

Heb. xii. 1.—'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.'

THE central idea of this sentence is a very familiar one in New Testament Scriptures and in our own phraseology. 'The race of life' is a phrase which covers a great truth. Life is a race, keener and more strenuous for some than for others, but a race for all to whom life is worthy of the name. People are trying to make it something else—a playground, a pleasure resort, a luxurious lounge, a garden of delights, a place of amusement. But the thing that is set before us is a race, and in some respects a long race—a Marathon, a long, long stretch, with the goal often far out of sight.

And it is an appointed race. Each has his own peculiar course to run, with his own peculiar equipment. 'The race set before us.' It is your own round of duties, your own relations and responsibilities. Not that each of us has not something to do with shaping his own course, but we should all of us admit that our power in this direction is severely limited. Our track is marked out for us by circumstances, by the relations into which we have entered with other persons, or into which we have been born. We have to plod along in our own path, to plough our own furrow, to bear our own burden; and a weary way and a heavy burden it often is. Many of us, if the truth were known, wish, at least occasionally, that some other track were ours, or that we had not chosen this particular course. We look from the inside of our own lot, which we know so well, to the outside of somebody else's track, which we know so imperfectly, and we are prone to fall into a mood of envy. But we do not see all. If we did, our envy might be abated. And, however that may be, here is the sober fact: we each have to run our own race, the race that is set before us, and not the one set before somebody else. It is better not to be looking at too many other tracks.

Before the mind's eye of the writer appear three things—three things merged together in actual life, but in the figure distinct. First he sees the runner in his long preparation for the race; then he sees him in the arena just before the contest begins; and, lastly, he contemplates him in the midst of the struggle.

1. It was no light thing to enter as a competitor in these world-renowned games, the lists of which were open to every civilized nation. The man who would excel in them—nay, the man who would not cover himself with ridicule in the contest—must be in perfect training. Weeks and months before the day fixed, those who were to present themselves were straining every nerve in their preparatory exercises. Every muscle must be strengthened and hardened; the physique of the competitors must be developed by constant practice; a rule of life must be for the time adopted by which all superfluous flesh could be got rid of. 'Every weight,' as the writer says, must be laid aside—every weight, that is, of flesh which does not minister to health and strength. In a word, the body must be prepared by incessant exercise. 'Everyone that striveth for the mastery is temperate—self-restraining, living under rule—in all things.'

These athletes in their preliminary training are an example to us Christians. They had a race to run; so have we. The race won gained for them a fading garland, a passing honour; for us it gains an imperishable crown, eternal glory. As they trained for their race, so must we for ours. As they exercised the body, so must we exercise the soul. Our life, like theirs, must be lived by rule. We must deny ourselves every pleasure,

[1] D. C. Lathbury, *Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone*, ii. 157.

every enjoyment of life, however innocent in itself, which would unfit us for putting forth all our power in the great business for which God has placed us here, the running of the race that is set before us.

2. But now the runners are on the ground. Their preparation is not over even yet. Those long flowing robes which form their ordinary attire, how can they run in them? They will impede their course at every step. And so they must be laid aside. The competitors put off their outer garments.

This, too, has its counterpart in the arena of the spiritual life. We Christians have that which we must put off from us if we would run aright the race that is set before us. 'Let us lay aside,' says our text, 'the sin which doth so easily beset us,' or, as it should be rendered, 'the sin with which we are begirt, which wraps us round like a garment.' For the apostolic writer is not thinking of what we usually describe as 'besetting sins.' We adopt the phrase of the text, and we use it to denote a very real fact, of which every one of us has daily experience in his life—those special sins into which more than any other we are liable to fall; the special weakness, the one great bitterness which each one knows in his own heart. But the words of the text have a different meaning. They picture sin as something which twines about us, enwraps and envelops us, hinders our heavenward course, trips us up at every step. The first essential of the Christian life is that this outer garment of sin should be cast away.

3. But all preparation is at length over; the runners have assembled at the starting-point; soon they will have entered upon the course. How, then, are they to run in order that they may be successful, in order that the chaplet of victory may be theirs? 'Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.' With patience. And what, we may well ask, has *patience* to do with an athletic contest? Little indeed. Patience is a thing which has its place far more in suffering than in acting. We may be patient in affliction when we receive it meekly, knowing that it comes from God. We may be patient in sickness, or in sorrow, or in privation or want, if we do not repine against it, or fret at the chastening of the Lord. But patience in active work, patience in the race of life—this has little meaning, little force. But put for 'patience' another phrase which comes nearer to the sense of the original Greek, and the lesson of our text at once becomes plain. The word here rendered 'patience' signifies constant, steady, unwavering perseverance. 'Let us run with constant perseverance the race that is set before us.' That is, indeed, the way in which a race *must* be run, if the runner is to overpass his fellows. No useless display, no wasting of strength in spasmodic efforts, but constant, steady, untiring exertion from end to end of the course. It is a very image of what the Christian life ought to be; and yet how many of us must own with sorrow that it is, after all, a picture of what our lives are not! We have our enthusiasms for God and for right; and well it is that we have them. Poor and miserable is the life which has no enthusiasm. But how often our outbursts of enthusiasm die away in the dull, monotonous round of ordinary life! How quickly at times does the warmth of our zeal cool in the chilly atmosphere of daily duty! Has not every one of us found himself again and again weary in well-doing? And yet the exhortation is to run the race with patience, with constant effort; with enthusiasm indeed, but with an enthusiasm which never leaves us; with zeal, but with a zeal which goes with us when the way seems long and progress is slow.

Thus, by the image of the race, our text shows us the nature of the Christian life. It has its training in self-denial and self-restraint; it has its preparation in the casting aside of the cloak of sin; it has its course in the unwearied effort to do our duty. In one respect, indeed, the metaphor fails. The contest is more difficult than the picture seems to suggest. For our training, our preparation, our course are not three successive acts: all three are ever present. Every day, every hour, we must be crushing down self; we must be repenting of our sins; we must be striving to do the will of God. It is an awful struggle. And the very surest sign that a man does not know what the Christian life means is that he has not realized the intensity and awfulness of the struggle which it involves.

¶ I remember once climbing a great Alpine peak. I was fagged and out of sorts, and the strain was considerable. I was not enjoying it, but knew I

should enjoy it at the top. I had not any spare energy to talk or look about, so I kept looking for a couple of hours at the heels of the guide, who was in front of and above me. That is going with patience. It is the holding out till the next glimpse of light comes from above. It is the determination of the runner, when the afternoon sun is blinding his eyes, and the afternoon languor is weighing upon him, that he will run on.[1]

Looking Unto Jesus.

Heb. xii. 2.—'Looking unto Jesus.'

This is the secret of success in the race. Because He sits high above the goal, because He is to judge the strife, and His hand is to confer the wreath of victory, we are to look unto Him as we run; nay, as the Greek verb implies, looking away from all others, all else, we are to look only to Him. There is to be a deliberate and energetic concentration of our whole power and aspiration on Him. Even the cloud of witnesses is to be only a cloud and nothing more. We may catch glimpses of them as we fly past; their tones of encouragement and approval, their testimony to the might and victory of faith, may float down upon us through the air; but, precious as their sympathy and their testimony may be, we must not suffer them to divert our attention from Him. They are valuable and helpful to us in proportion as they bear witness to, as they fix our thoughts and affections on, Him from whom they drew their inspiration and strength. Nor are we to be for ever comparing ourselves with our rivals and companions, measuring ourselves against them, content if we do not fall behind them, judging of our success or failure by the position we occupy relatively to them. That is not how the runner who means to win carries himself. He fixes his eyes on, he bends all his energies toward, the goal, and the prize, and the Judge who awards the prize. There is much—so the Greek verb seems to imply—to solicit our attention, to divert our thoughts in the grandeur of the scene around us, in the bearing of the witnesses and of our rivals in the strife, in our own mental and emotional conditions, in the hopes and fears that arise within us; but none of these must be allowed more than a passing thought; we must arrest and fix our wandering gaze, fix it on the Judge. Looking away from all else, we are to look steadfastly on Jesus.

And unless we learn the secret of looking unto Jesus Christ and having our lives transformed by our vision of Him, what influence will we have as we go out—except the influence of nullification upon the gospel and reproach upon Jesus Christ? If we want our lives changed, here is the secret that each of us may gain for himself to-day. Looking away unto Jesus Christ and keeping our eyes fixed there is the secret of the radiant light.

1. First of all, it is looking unto Christ that gives us the right conception of what character is. I look away from Christ and I have one idea of what constitutes perfect character. We are forming, all of us, diverse judgments of ideals and standards of life proportioned exactly to the clearness of our vision of Jesus Christ. What ideals do we see?

¶ I was sitting in my library the other day dictating some letters, and I happened to look up suddenly at Watts' picture of Sir Galahad. There was a little yellow light falling just on the face and nowhere else, and I said, is it possible that Watts put that light there and I never saw it before? I examined the picture and found a stray ray of sunlight coming in and falling upon Sir Galahad's face. I saw anew what gave that picture its grace and power. What Watts had painted was not Sir Galahad, but what Sir Galahad was seeing. What was there in the fresh, wistful, youthful face? What was there was just the reflection of the far-off vision of the grail Sir Galahad was following. The purity, strength, and holiness of what he saw were painted there in his life. The qualities of character which he was beholding were writing themselves on his face. And what is the significance of those words in the prologue of the Gospel of John, 'and the Word was toward God,' but that the face of the Word was ever directed toward the face of the Father, so that what we see in looking toward the face of Jesus Christ is not so much anything original as a reflection upon the life of Christ of what He sees passing in the face and heart of God? He is what He is in His character because He is looking away unto what God is in His character. We will have in our lives as we go out precisely those ideals of character

[1] J. F. Ewing, *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, 211.

which we see as qualities in Christ. Is our vision of Him dim, obscure, oblique? We shall go away with defective standards of judgment as to our moral life. Is our vision of Christ clear and unclouded and direct? If we have been brought to where no mist conceals the beauty of His face, we shall go with our standards of character patterned after His own.[1]

2. Looking away unto Christ not only gives a man the right conception of what character is, but shames him out of evil character; solidifies him in the deliberate choice of the character which is right. Every one of us knows the possibility of doing things under some circumstances which we cannot do under other circumstances. If we are living with our faces turned toward our Lord Jesus Christ there are certain practices that become absolutely impossible in our lives. You cannot have certain thoughts if you are aware that Jesus Christ is in the room. You cannot do certain things with your hands, realizing that Christ is near and that at any moment He may lay His pierced hand on your hands.

¶ I was reading again not long ago the life of Keith Falconer, and some of his boyhood letters. In one he is speaking of the hymns of which he was most fond. There were many that were dear to him, but none so dear as the hymn we call by the name of Rutherford, 'The Sands of Time are Sinking,' especially the second stanza:

> O Christ! He is the fountain,
> The deep, sweet well of love;
> The streams on earth I've tasted
> More deep I'll drink above;
> There to an ocean fulness
> His mercy doth expand,
> And glory, glory dwelleth
> In Immanuel's land.

And then in another he goes on to tell how with this fresh, loving Christ, glowing all warm and tender in his life, new tests have come to him, and certain things which were practicable to him before he now finds to be utterly impossible in his life: 'I must say something about Jesus Christ, because I think He ought never to be left out; and that is the fault I find with parties and balls and theatres: Jesus Christ who is the All in All is utterly left out.' Suppose we ran that rule across our lives. How much evil, shame, sin, and impurity would vanish from them! You remember the powerful story that is prefixed to the eighth chapter of the Gospel of John. What is the lesson of that story? How differently the presence of Jesus Christ made things look! Those men thought they were doing a very fine thing when they got that poor woman and resolved to bring her into Christ's presence. Every man felt proud in the thought of his own sinlessness as he dragged the tarnished woman into the presence of the Saviour. How differently it looked after they got there, when Jesus wrote with His finger on the ground while the men looked and thought. How utterly different everything began to look to these men! After a little while the oldest man slunk off, and the next, and the next, and the next, until Jesus was left with the woman alone. They did not feel as they stood in Christ's presence as they felt out in the street. You and I know we do not feel the same toward sin away from Him. If only we could school ourselves into looking unto Him every hour, every day, it would make impossible many things that have stained and defiled our lives.[1]

3. And looking away to Him would nerve us to resist all evil and to do the things that are right and good. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes use of this conception. He is thinking of the Christian life as a race to be run. At the end of the course, behind the goal, he imagines the Saviour is standing holding the chaplets of olive leaves in His hand, waiting to greet the runners as they come in. We should rise up above our craven fear of those adversaries under whom we have again and again gone down if only we kept our eyes fixed on the Saviour there waiting for us behind the goal. Looking away to Jesus would shame many of us out of evil character. It would form and perfect in us a more stainless life.

¶ Some of you will have read the story which Dr. James H. Taylor wrote some years ago of the curious old New England character of the third decade of the last century named Jake Parsons. The change in his life was far-famed, so significant and revolutionary had it been. He lay down to sleep one night an absolutely drunken, worthless

[1] R. E. Speer, *The Master of the Heart*, 121.

[1] R. E. Speer, *The Master of the Heart*, 1

wretch, having wellnigh lost his power of speech through his dissipation, loved only by the fragment of the family that was left to him. He woke up the next morning an absolutely changed man. For nearly forty years after that he lived a life without blemish or blot. Eight years after the change some one asked him what had produced it. This is the explanation he gave: 'That night Jesus Christ appeared in my sleep. His face, as I saw it, seemed so pure, so lovely, and so friendly to me that when I awoke I forgot my old vices, and so loved my Saviour that I could not displease Him. Why, the sight of the face of Jesus was so pure, so lovely, and so beautiful! He did not speak to me; but His look told me that there was hope for me, that I could be forgiven, I could be purified. I looked at Him and cried like a child; I felt that I was a vile, miserable, wicked wretch, filthier than a dunghill. I cannot tell how I felt. When I looked at Him I was too happy to be afraid; but when I looked at myself I was too afraid to be happy. I forgot all about rum and tobacco, I was thinking so much about Christ, so pure, so lovely, so beautiful, so friendly. He was all heaven, all grace and beauty'. One who knew him well, so Dr. Taylor says, wrote: 'For thirty-five years he lived a blameless life, beloved by everybody. On a fine summer morning, my friend writes, the glorious old-new creature would crawl out of doors, and seating himself on the grassy bank in front of his humble home, turning his sightless face to the sun to feel its warmth, would say: "The door is open into Heaven, just a little crack, and I shall soon see Jesus again. I shall know Him. He will look just so." So he lived until he fell asleep in Jesus.'[1]

The Faith of Jesus.

Heb. xii. 2.—'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.'

This verse is so translated as seriously to obscure the writer's meaning. Jesus is in our Version represented as 'the author and finisher of our faith,' by which we naturally understand that it is He who originates faith in us and brings it to perfection, that we are His pupils and in His hands throughout, and that it is to Him we must look as able to produce and to perfect faith in us. This is, of course, true, but it is not the truth which the writer had in view. In the first place, you notice that the word 'our' is inserted in our Version without any corresponding word in the original, which might of itself show us that it is not our faith directly that is spoken of. And in the second place, the word translated 'author' is better translated by the word 'captain' in a former passage of this Epistle, where the writer speaks of Christ in terms that throw light upon the words before us, as being made perfect through sufferings and so becoming the Captain of our salvation. Similarly here he bids us in all distresses and temptations look to Jesus, the Captain or Leader in faith, the Captain who goes before us in this fight of faith and in His own person shows us how to endure hardness as His good soldiers. The whole context guides us to the same meaning.

To say that Christ is the author of *our* faith is to say a most unusual thing, and a thing that has no connexion with the context. The writer is urging us, while remembering the 'great cloud of witnesses', enumerated in the preceding chapter, who witness to the power of faith to triumph over all opposition, to turn from these witnesses to a witness nobler still, the faith of Jesus, 'who, for the joy set before him'—the joy of saving a perishing world by His death—'*endured the cross.*' So the subject of this verse is not *our* faith, but the faith of Jesus, a conclusion which the compound Greek verb that is chosen strongly confirms, 'looking away unto Jesus,' meaning that His faith transcends that of all others.

1. This is the only place in the New Testament in which faith is attributed, in so many words, to our Lord. But in this same Epistle, in an earlier chapter, we find the writer adducing it as one of the clearest proofs of His true manhood and brotherhood with us, so that the words of the psalm, 'I will put my trust in him', may stand as the embodiment of the very spirit of His life. We do not give sufficient prominence, in our thoughts of Christ's earthly life, to this aspect of it—that it was one of faith. He is our Pattern in this as in all that belongs to humanity. He proved His manhood not only by His participation in our corporeal necessities, though His share in them does touchingly show us how really He was

[1] R. E. Speer, *The Master of the Heart*, 127.

our Brother. He sat wearied by the well, He hungered, He thirsted, He slept, He felt pain, He died. Nor are we to look upon His participation in our common human emotions as being the selectest proof of His humanity—precious as it is to know that He sorrowed and rejoiced and wept and was grieved, and wondered and pitied, and was angry—but we are to see His brotherhood in this: that all which binds us men to God in the acts of humble dependence and filial trust belonged to His experience; and that, as He is pattern in all else He is pattern in this too. His life was a life of faith, and its life breath was prayer.

(1) For faith is *dependence upon God,* and surely never did human being so utterly hang upon the Father, or submit himself so absolutely to be moulded and determined by Him, or yield his will up so completely to that will as did He who could say, 'The living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father.'

(2) Faith is *communion,* and surely never did a spirit dwell in such deep and constant realization of a Divine presence and a Divine sustaining as did that Christ who could say, 'the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always these things that please him.' That pure mirror, without a flaw, without a distortion, ever reflected the brightness of the Father's face; and the unbroken continuity of Christ's communion with God by faith is witnessed to us by that exceeding great and bitter cry which He put forth on the cross, when the weight of a world's sin snapped even that strong bond, and, with a strange new sense of desolation, He had to say, 'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

(3) Faith is the vivid *realization of the unseen,* and surely never was there a life lived amidst the shows and gauds and illusions of time which so manifestly and transparently was passed in the vivid consciousness of that unseen world as was the life of that Son of Man who, in the midst of all earth's engagements, could call Himself 'the Son of man which is in Heaven.'

(4) Faith is a life of *assured confidence in an unseen future,* and surely never was there a life which was so entirely dominated by that unseen hope, as His life, who, as the next clause says, 'for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.'

2. Jesus, then, is set before us here, not as the originator of faith in us, but as Himself displaying a perfect faith. We are invited to consider Him, not as He is, exalted, and able as a conqueror to communicate spiritual gifts, but first of all as down on the battlefield, often beaten to His knees, hard pressed by the very foes that assail ourselves, and saving Himself only by the faith to which His brethren in the flesh are called. He that sanctifies and they that are sanctified are all of one. He is perfected by suffering as they. He is human and obliged to make growth in human righteousness by fighting the same foes which keep us back and which we also must vanquish. We have not a Captain who cannot be touched with a feeling for our weaknesses, for it was no idle victory that gained Him the honours He now enjoys; the place He now holds He fought His way to, often in an apparently doubtful contest, a contest that bewildered and exhausted Him and drew much blood, a contest for which He needed the strongest faith. Faith, says this writer, is the confident expectation of future good, the vivid realization of unseen verities; it was this faith that upheld our Leader. The joy that was set before Him—our deliverance and triumph—this nerved His arm once more when it was numbed with conflict, and brought light to His eye dimmed with fatigue and anxiety. It was thus that He became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that believe on Him. It was by Himself faithfully accepting the Father's will that He at once won the victory for us and showed us the way to reach His own victory. By going before us He has crippled the enemy and opened a way through the thick of the battle; all that we could not face He has faced for us; and now from the height He has gained He animates us with His voice: 'In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' It has broken its weapons on Him and can now only cut skin-deep. He has driven aside all that is fatal, and has bound it so that it cannot reach those that follow close in His steps.

The more we consider the life of Jesus, the more clearly we shall see the demands which it made upon His faith, and the frequent illustrations it gives of faith. In this feature, as in so many others, it soars above any other life that has ever been lived on the earth, for in no other has faith

been perfected. His path was dark with mystery as well as with sorrow. It was in opposition to His whole nature, contrary and repulsive to His instincts and tastes, for it was downward to death and the grave, when His heart was ready to soar upward to the eternal radiance. His life and death were an agony. No athlete in the arena, struggling with wild beasts for life and liberty, ever knew more tension and strain than He. But, through all, His faith was unshaken, and never wavered. 'My Father calls,' was the sentiment of His first recorded words and expresses some of His latest utterances. Through mystery and sorrow He passed, through agony and conflict, through death and the grave. Almost His last words upon the cross declared not only the wreck of His moral frame, but His unshaken faith in God: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.'

Therefore *consider* Jesus, consider this 'greatest of all believers,' this perfect pattern of faith, this crowning and unquestionable instance of faith's trial and triumph. Consider Him till you feel assured that this is the life for you, this the ideal you would fain realize. If you need encouragement—and who does not?—here you will find it. However dark and perplexed and slippery your way has become, however complicated and difficult and full of anxiety your life is, you need not be defeated. You have been, perhaps, in many an agony, have writhed and tossed in your mental distress—all this happens many a time in lives that are quiet enough to the public eye; but even though you feel that no sorrow has been like yours, still it holds true that there is a way through it, it has an end. Jesus held to the belief that righteousness must come eventually into a land of light and joy; He believed in God, and is now at His right hand. The same course and the same result are open to you.

The Shame of the Cross.

Heb. xii. 2.—'Who . . . endured the cross, despising the shame.'

In the New Testament the disgrace of their sufferings comes out very distinctly as part of the trial which the confessors of Christianity must brace their minds to endure. Take, for example, St. Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy, and you will find that the thought is constantly recurring to him of the shame which he is suffering for Christ's name, and which he has forced himself, though evidently not without some struggle, to disregard. 'I suffer these things,' he says, 'nevertheless I am not ashamed.' He remembers gratefully that Onesiphorus, so far from being ashamed of his chain, had on his arrival at Rome sought him out the more diligently. He exhorts Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of St. Paul himself, His prisoner. And the reason of the shame is very plainly indicated in another incidental expression, 'I am suffering like a malefactor even unto bonds'; that is to say, the punishment he was bearing was that usually inflicted on criminals, and therefore suggested to all who knew of it that he too must have deserved it for his crimes. It is a very strong proof that we have in this Epistle the words of St. Paul himself, that he shows himself so sensitive to the disgrace of his position, for in the next generation persecution for Christ's sake had become common, and the sufferers were in no danger of being confounded with ordinary criminals.

No thought could inspire more steadfastness in those called on to face this disgrace than the reflection suggested in the text, that their Master had despised worse shame for their sake. No punishment inflicted on our worst criminals sounds in our ears so degrading as the punishment of the cross did in the ears of men of those days. It was the death inflicted on slaves, a class whom the freeborn scarcely regarded as their fellow-creatures. The humanity of the present day is far more revolted by unnecessary suffering inflicted on one of the brute creation than the feelings of the men then counted most humane would be by any torture inflicted on a slave. If others besides slaves were subjected to the punishment of crucifixion, it was because their crimes were thought to be so bad or their condition so low that no compunction need be felt at inflicting on them the death of a slave.

1. In enduring the cross, then, our Lord submitted to the lowest depth of earthly degradation.

(1) In the first place it was the most *painful* of deaths. It subjected the sufferer to excessive pain and torture. This was so well known that the Romans derived from this very punishment

the word which in their language expressed the greatest degree of pain; and we, borrowing the word from them, call such a pain an excruciating pain; that is, a pain like that which was felt on the cross. Nor have we any word in our language more descriptive of violent agony than this. Nay, so dreadful was the pain of dying on the cross that it was accounted a peculiar act of mercy in the judge to permit the criminal to be killed before his body should be crucified. Indeed, the very nature of the punishment shows how excessive must have been the pain attending it. That the hands and feet, which, being full of nerves, belong to the most sensitive parts of the human body, should be pierced through, and fastened to the wood with iron spikes; that then, by the sudden raising up of the cross, and the fixing of the foot of it in the earth, the whole weight of the body should be thrown upon these torn and tender parts; how dreadful must have been the suffering! How exquisite the torture! Add to this that the death of the cross was a slow, a tedious, a lingering death. The pain, great as it was, did not quickly put an end to the life, and so by its own violence deliver the sufferer from misery. It destroyed him by degrees. It tortured, without immediately killing him. No vital part was touched. The crucified person was left to live under all this torment till, through anguish, loss of blood, fatigue and famine, his natural strength was quite worn out, and his heart ceased to beat. You may remember that when Jesus had hung for six hours on the cross, Pilate '*marvelled* if he were already dead'; and the two thieves, who were crucified with Him, were both yet alive when the soldiers came to take down their bodies from the cross in the evening of the day on which they had been executed. On the whole, we cannot well conceive a death more painful than the death of the cross, or one which the most ingenious cruelty could have invented more suited to its purpose.

(2) In the second place, it was the most *shameful* of deaths. Any death by the hand of the public executioner is shameful. It is always intended to bring disgrace on those who suffer it. But we can hardly have any just conception of the degree of infamy which was attached to the death of the cross. We must indeed be sensible that the very circumstance of being publicly hung up as a criminal, exposed to the eye of every beholder, and having the crime for which this punishment was supposed to be inflicted written in large letters on the top of the cross, was in itself very ignominious. But it was the general opinion in which this punishment was held that stamped on it the deepest ignominy. It was not a Jewish but a Roman punishment—one, however, which was deemed too infamous for any Roman citizen ever to suffer. It was inflicted only on the lowest and vilest of mankind; on slaves, and notorious criminals; on such as were accounted the pests and outcasts of society, a disgrace to human nature, and unworthy to be treated like human beings. These were the persons for whom, by the Roman law, this punishment was reserved. And hence we may judge in what light it was generally regarded, and how great was the infamy attached to it. As a fact also, which further proves this point, it may be added that it was not uncommon to take even the dead bodies of criminals who had not fallen alive into the hands of public justice, and to hang these upon the cross, as the way of expressing the greatest detestation and contempt of their character, and of branding their memory with disgrace and ignominy. And it was for this reason, for the shame and infamy which this death brought with it, as much as for the pain and torture which it inflicted, that the Jews were so clamorous for Jesus to be crucified. They not only designed, by putting Him to this slow and painful death, to gratify their malice and cruelty; they also intended, by the infliction of this punishment, to sink and degrade Him to the very lowest depth of debasement; to rank Him with the worst and vilest of mankind; to set Him forth to the nation and to the world as an object of universal detestation and scorn; and to make His very name infamous and accursed.

(3) Such were the general circumstances which distinguished the death of the cross from every other death, and made it beyond all others dreadful and degrading. But, in addition to these, there were *in the case of Jesus some particular circumstances,* which increased and aggravated both the usual pain and the shame of crucifixion. As if the pain of the cross were not of itself sufficient to glut the vengeance of His enemies, they beat and buffeted Him, and tore His back with scourges, before they led Him to be crucified. They made

a crown of thorns and fixed it on His head by driving the points into His bleeding temples. They next forced Him, though exhausted by these cruelties, to carry to the place of execution the heavy cross-bar of the cross to which He was to be nailed.

Again, as if the common shame and ignominy of crucifixion were not sufficient to express the infamy with which His enemies wished to load Him, they preferred before Him Barabbas, a notorious robber who for sedition and murder had been cast into prison, demanding that he might be released and Jesus crucified. Then to show more pointedly the light in which they wished to represent Him, they executed Him in company with two malefactors, placing Him in the midst, as being in their judgment the worst and vilest of the three. Next, in derision they placed in writing over His head: 'THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS'; by which they meant in the most insulting manner to scoff at His pretensions to that title. Here, then, we might have supposed that malice would have ceased its efforts; that if pity had not touched the breast at the sight of so much misery, yet that invention itself would have been worn out. But no; further ignominy still awaited the wretched sufferer. While hanging in this dreadful torment, He was yet to encounter further indignities; to listen to every reproachful taunt which scorn and passion could cast upon Him. The soldiers who had nailed Him to the cross mocked Him, laughed at His sufferings and derided His cries. The people who passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross.' One, at least, of the thieves who were crucified with Him cast the same in His teeth. Nay, the scribes and elders, the rulers and the priests, even the chief priests themselves, were so forgetful of what became their rank and character as to take part in this inhuman scene, and to join in reviling Jesus, and in putting Him to shame: 'He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.'

2. Jesus had to drain the dregs of the cup of shame deeper than any of His followers since has done. To scarcely any of them has it happened that the trial has been all shame. If a mob cried out against them as evil-doers who deserved their fate, they still might commonly notice some present in the throng who honoured their constancy, and whose sympathy and good opinion helped them to despise the blindness of those who in their ignorance scorned and reviled them. All the early Christian martyrs of whom we read could catch sight of sympathizing spectators standing round the judgment-seat. When Polycarp came before the tribunal he might hear the cry, 'Play the man, Polycarp!' ring out among the clamour of the heathen. But who was there among the crowd that stood round our Lord's cross who knew of the glorious work which His death was accomplishing? Who that read the title over his head, 'THE KING OF THE JEWS,' could feel assurance to confront those who regarded it as the exposure to just derision of a vain and empty boast? Who would dare to assert it as the sufferer's rightful description? He looked for some to have pity on Him; but there was no man, neither found He any to comfort Him. The shame of the cross remained for some time the stumbling-block, as the Apostle called it, in the way of those who were called to make profession of faith in the Messiahship of Jesus. How were they to own as their Saviour and Deliverer Him who had not been able to save Himself? How proclaim as King Him who had been put to open disgrace by the leading men of the nation whom He had claimed to rule?

It might seem as if now the shame had quite passed away. It took less than 300 years from the time that the cross expressed the lowest ignominy the subjects of the Roman Emperor knew until the Roman Emperor placed it in the standards of his army and hailed it as the sign of victory. We are under no temptation to be ashamed of the Cross. We put that sign everywhere in the place of honour, and naturally, since it is the emblem of the religion professed by the most civilized and most progressive peoples of the world. And yet is shame never the terror which keeps us from owning and acting on known obligations? In *The Pilgrim's Progress* John Bunyan describes the experience of the Christian pilgrim to have been that, of all the enemies which had beset him, the most shameless was Shame. No other had been so pertinacious in his assaults, so hard to baffle, so unwilling to submit to a repulse. Repeatedly has

the right course been recognized, and shame has whispered of the ridicule, the censure, the disgrace that following it would entail, and the timid pilgrim has shrunk from acting on his convictions.

The Joy of Jesus.

Heb. xii. 2.—'Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.'

George Matheson, in one of his books, says that every schoolboy studies his lesson, not in the light of the lamp, but in the light of the coming holiday. He means that we live by our anticipations and expectations rather than by our immediate achievements. Browning has put it in that often quoted line, that

> A man's reach must exceed his grasp,
> Else what's a heaven for?

Once deprive a man of anticipation, once take that mystic haze of expectancy and uncertainty from his future, and his work becomes monotonous and unpleasant and terribly depressing. But all the work that we do, everything that we desire and plan and work and suffer for, is done in the light of something that lies just beyond it. It is the vision beyond our work that enables us to endure its hardness.[1]

We are aware of a certain reluctance on our part to attribute to our Lord feelings and motives which influence ourselves, even when those feelings and motives are altogether good. And there is something in this reluctance to which we must always pay respect. We do well to be careful how we speak of ourselves as in any circumstances occupying the same place as Jesus occupied, or as fulfilling in our life what was the deepest intention in His. And yet we must take equal care how we separate ourselves from Christ, thinking to do Him honour by declaring that there is and can be nothing in common between Him and us, between His feelings and ours, as though life were easier for Him. If there is one thing which the New Testament is more urgent about than anything else, it is that Christ is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, that He truly lived, truly suffered and learned and understood. And, in the long run, they are found to have done a grave injury to the influence of Christ upon the human heart who, in an irreligious solicitude for the uniqueness of His person, lift Him clear of the region of our dim and ambiguous world.

1. So let us consider Jesus as able to endure the cross because of what He saw before Him and His joy in the prospect. What was His joy?

(1) It was the joy of *doing His Father's will.* 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' He said that even as a boy. It was a joy to be doing His Father's work. 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!' And the reason why it was such a bitter moment on the cross when His Father's face was hidden from Him was that it hid His joy for the moment. The first part of His joy was to have come through the misrepresentation, through the spitting, through the awful desertion of his friends, through the pain of the cross, to fulfil perfectly His Father's will. 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' That was the first joy that was set before Him; not to go back, and get away from the pain, but to receive the Father's benediction, to have satisfied the Father's heart, to have done His father's will; that was the first joy that was set before Him, which made Him endure the cross to the end.

(2) But the Father's will was *the redemption of the world.* That was the future good which ever drew the Master onward in all the rough and thorny paths—trodden often with bleeding feet, but never with averted will—of His daily passion and of His ultimate death. In His humanity Jesus Christ lived and moved and had His being in these two things, which were one thing—obedience to the Father's will and yearning desire for the world's salvation. 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.' Looking out over the world He said: 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd.' And again He said, linking together, precisely as the text does, His confident faith and what was needed in order to realize it: 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.'

¶ The great Indian poet and prophet Tagore, whose writings are becoming an inspiration to thousands in this country, speaks of joy—God's own joy—as the motive and cause of the creation

[1] H. E. Kirk, in *Record of Christian Work*, 1922, p. 620.

of the world. Joy, he says, belongs inseparably to the act of creation. It is at once the motive of creation and the experience which accompanies every creative act. This seems to me profoundly true. Joy, for us, is the sense of active co-operation with the laws of God's world. It is, always, the glad feeling that we are, for the time at least, in harmony with the Mind of God, that we are, in however small a degree, thinking God's thoughts after Him, and doing what He wishes to see being done. Joy is the spontaneous elevation of mind which rewards all good work. The poet feels joy when he has translated a beautiful idea into beautiful language; the artist feels joy when he has reproduced on canvas some lovely vision that floats before his mind's eye; the man of science when he has discovered some long-hidden secret of Nature's laws; the craftsman when he contemplates a piece of skilful and honest work that he has turned out; and we all feel it when we have faithfully obeyed the voice of conscience, and done an action with which we hope that God will be pleased. In every case, it is as creators of something that we feel joy. It is the satisfaction of the deepest need of our nature, that of doing or making something which is intrinsically right and good, which gives us joy. And are we to suppose that the most glorious of all achievements, the redemption of mankind by the perfect Man who alone could redeem it, gave no joy to its Author? Must it not have been a joy transcending all other joys when our Redeemer felt that He could say to His Father, 'I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do,' or when at the moment of death He uttered the single triumphant word *tetelestai,* 'It is finished'? The joy of the young mother 'that a man is born into the world' must be a pale shadow of the joy which Christ felt at His 'new creation' then safely delivered in pain and sorrow—the new dispensation, the new 'order of love,' the new covenant between God and man sealed with His blood. [1]

2. This joy was 'set before him.' It was part of His endowment while on earth, a joy which nothing, not the hour of Gethsemane, not the lingering hours on the cross, could take from Him. It is of such a joy as this that He said to His closest disciples just before the Agony, 'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full.' It is a joy which the crucified Redeemer does not grudge to His servants. It is the joy of all the purest souls, those who in His strength, and for His dear sake, have fought the better fight and counted not their lives dear unto themselves. They, too, before their deaths, and how much more after, have seen something of the travail of their souls in the sure and certain hope that what they did or suffered for others was done or suffered for Him.

¶ The Saint loves the world as Christ loved it, and desires to suffer for it *through an instinct, which tells him that only so can its highest deliverance be wrought out.* Xavier, before setting forth on his great mission, had a vision, in which every conceivable form of danger, persecution, and death, was placed before him as his portion, which beholding, he exclaimed, 'Yet more, O Lord, yet more!' Compare this with what Brainerd tells us of the beginning of his ministry, and of that deep preparation of heart in which, when yet young, he spent hours and days, as he writes in his diary, 'in the power of intercession for precious, immortal souls, for the advancement of the kingdom of my dear Lord and Saviour in the world. I feel,' he continues, 'withal a most sweet resignation, and even consolation and joy, in the thought of suffering hardships, distresses, and even death itself in the promotion of it, and had special enlargement in pleading for the enlightening and conversion of the poor heathen. In the afternoon God was with me of a truth, and it was blessed company indeed. God enabled me so to agonize in prayer that I was quite wet with sweat, though in the shade, and the wind cool. My soul was drawn out very much for the world; *I grasped for multitudes of* souls. I think I had more enlargement for sinners than for the children of God, though I felt as if I could spend my life in cries for both. I pleaded earnestly for my own dear brother John, that God would make him more of a pilgrim and stranger on the earth; and fit him for singular serviceableness in the world; and my heart sweetly exulted in the Lord, in the thoughts of any distresses that might alight *on him or me* in the advancement of Christ's kingdom upon earth.' [1]

[1] W. R. Inge.

[1] Dora Greenwell, *Colloquia Crucis*, 92.

The Contradiction of Sinners.

Heb. xii. 3.—'Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.'

THE word 'contradiction' is used by the writer to include the whole of the opposition which our Lord experienced from sinners. Our text stands in close connexion with the preceding verse, in which Jesus is said to have 'endured the cross, despising the shame.' But the cross was only the climax of a long and varied course of contradiction and antagonism out of which it sprung, without which it would not have been reached, and by which alone it can be understood and duly estimated. The death of Christ can be understood only in the light of His life.

The first contradiction Christ endured was in the unbelief which met Him. In Him came forth, from out of the Eternal, the very Divine Truth; and that which He declared men denied. He taught men their need of a new mind and a renewed life; they denied its necessity. He said the Father had sent Him into the world; by unbelief they declared His claim to be a falsehood. In and through the human life there shone with growing clearness, and with every tone and colour of radiance, the light of the glory which enabled some to say, 'Thou art the Christ!' 'Truly this was the Son of God'; but the majority, in proud scorn or sensuous blindness, rejected both the testimony of His life and the testimony of His lips. As He manifested Himself with growing clearness, they contradicted Him with more decision and emphasis. He was the True One and the Truth; but they affirmed Him either deceived or a deceiver—utterly untrustworthy. And that contradiction was endured with human patience and Divine long-suffering.

But this contradiction advanced to open condemnation. He was said to be a 'gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners'—an insinuation that He was not Himself either temperate or righteous. Some said, 'We know this man is a sinner,' when He did good on the Sabbath day. Indeed, they said His power over evil spirits was due to a league between Himself and the prince of the devils. On one occasion the Jews said unto Him, to His very face, 'Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?' 'A Samaritan'—that is a heretic! 'Hast a devil'—art possessed by an evil power! They charged Him with being the enemy of God and man, a blasphemer and an evil-doer. They made Him an incarnation of evil. Remember who it was against whom all these false and bitter things were spoken. Consider Him, and see His brave endurance.

And there was an element in all this contradiction which added to its painfulness. It was not the result, in general, of a mistake, which could be excused by the Sufferer. It had its root in personal hate—'Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.' And He knew the cause of that hate. It came out of a conscious moral antipathy. His nature and spirit and life gave theirs no support, no recognition, no justification. His pure, holy, humble, unselfish life made them and others conscious of the unreality and hollowness of their assumed excellence. The sense of difference which might have led to their loving Him and becoming like Him was voluntarily turned into hate. To be misunderstood and misrepresented is hard to endure; but to be hated for being more noble than others is perhaps the most painful experience. And He endured this hate—He who combined in His own person all that is gracious in God and all that is lovable in man.

This antagonism and hate could not fail to proceed to acts of violence, if occasion should arise. 'They took up stones to stone him'; and, think you, was it not as if He felt the blows of hardness of heart hurled at Him as He preserved Himself from this attempt upon His life? On another occasion, when again they made a similar attempt, they were stung into some measure of shame by His asking for which of His good works they would stone Him. He knew, and they knew, that it was really from hatred of His good works that they sought His life. And now, to put on a semblance of justification, they sought occasion to put Him to death. To fulfil this diabolical purpose they plotted and planned and persevered in a manner which involved the setting aside of all sense of fairness, all regard for their own modes of legal procedure, the use of that hated power of Rome, and the crushing in their hearts of the last vestige of human compassion. We need not rehearse the facts so well known to us all—the unlawful

apprehension at night, the mock trial, the false witnesses, the scenes before Pilate and Herod, the cruel mockings and scourging, the crowning with thorns, the journey to Calvary, the crucifixion, and all the manifold exhibitions of exultant hate. The physical sufferings alone surpass our comprehension; but they were only the outward symbols of a most painful moral and spiritual experience. To Christ the spiritual was not less real than the physical; and in every infliction of suffering and wrong upon Him by the hands of wicked men He felt the spirit of the acts—the sin of the world—going right down deep into His soul. Yes, the painful pressure of the crown of thorns, the piercing of nails and the anguish of the body, were means through which He bore in Himself the contradiction of sinners and of sin. What He endured was no mere suffering, but sin—the contradiction of all that He Himself was. 'Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.' He saw and felt in it its full significance. It was endured as no passing phase of human life. It was felt as the sin which was, and is still, in the world. The God-man endured the contradictions of sinners against Himself; He 'bare our sins in his own body on the tree.'

This endurance of the contradiction of sinners was out of consideration to them. He might have saved Himself, and have made them feel His contradiction against themselves. But He suffered Himself, instead of making them suffer. His consideration for them was grounded in love—love to them and to us. And in love He endured seeing them the opposite of that which He could love; endured receiving from them the reverse of that which He had a right to expect, the opposite of that which His coming had made possible. If there was one thing which must have been almost impossible to Christ—and perhaps it was that which was expressed in the agony of the Garden—it was to endure the cross from those whom He loved. If He could have hated and despised those who contradicted Him, it would have been less painful to His spirit to endure the contradiction. But the more He loved them, the more bitter became every experience, the more pointed and painful every act of wrong.

'Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself,' and consider Him, with this fact in mind, that in thus enduring He was exhibiting and putting forth His gracious power to save us from sinning against Him. The purpose of His cross is to reconcile us and all things to Himself, to bring us into harmony of mind and life with Him, to destroy our contradiction by enduring it.

It was no path of flowers,
Which, through this world of ours,
Belovèd of the Father, Thou didst tread;
And shall we in dismay
Shrink from the narrow way,
When clouds and darkness are around it spread?

O Thou, Who art our life,
Be with us through the strife;
Thy holy head by earth's fierce storms was bowed:
Raise Thou our eyes above,
To see a Father's love
Beam, like the bow of promise, thro' the cloud.

Chastening.

Heb. xii. 6.—'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.'

It is a strange mystery of grace that 'whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.' And it is still stranger that those whom He loveth much He chasteneth much, and those whom He chasteneth most are the dearest of all.

1. Nothing tries faith and patience more keenly than prolonged suffering. A long-drawn-out sickness is worse to bear than a short one much severer while it lasts. Job could bear patiently a perfect cataract of calamities that were all compressed into the compass of a single day; but when God's afflicting Hand pressed him lower day after day, and he saw no end of his misery but the grave, his faith gave way, he cursed his life, and bitterly wished he had never been born. It is not the intensity of suffering but the weary length of it that most sorely depresses the heart. Even where faith does not give way, and the long weariness is accepted as God's good and perfect will, the strain of it is often acutely felt.

That very saintly man, Dr. Payson, gave his experience of this when he wrote, 'Every night death comes and stands beside my bed in the form of terrible convulsions, each one of which threatens

to separate soul from body, and these continue to grow worse and worse till every bone is aching with pain, leaving me with the certainty that I shall have it all to endure the next night again.' But he could add, 'While my body is thus tortured my soul is perfectly happy, more happy than I can express; my joy in God so abounds as to make my sufferings not only bearable but welcome.' Once, when visiting a sick parishioner, he somewhat abruptly said, 'Do you know why God lays people down upon their backs?'; and, on the sufferer saying he had never thought of it, he replied, 'I can tell you the reason; it is just that they may look straight up.' That was one of the precious lessons God had taught him on his bed of pain. [1]

He wisely loveth all;
And whom He loves, He still doth train and teach;
But whom He loveth most, on them doth fall
Oft-times His sharpest speech;

Whereat they wonder much
And envy oft, when other souls the while,
That lightlier serve, receive the gentler touch,
The kinder-seeming smile.

But He doth all things right,
Gathering both pearls and diamonds for His crown,
Those cleansing, these transforming for delight,
Pruning all roughness down. [2]

¶ Says James Fraser of Brea: 'Evils, such as afflictions, desertions, temptations, plagues of heart, though in themselves they be evil, yet are in their end and destination from love and for good. *The messenger indeed is hard favoured and unpleasant to behold but he hath a love letter from God.*'

2. Many of God's children are learning such lessons. If not so continuously racked with pain, they have yet been kept almost life-long prisoners in the grip of ill-health, shut out from life's work, and from life's enjoyments too, laid low in sick-rooms, needing the constant ministry of other hands, weary of their own helplessness, and saying sometimes, with subdued yet passionate utterance, 'Oh for just one week of perfect health!'

[1] G. H. Knight, *In the Cloudy and Dark Day*, 32.
[2] C. L. Ford.

Do they suffer needlessly, these patient souls? Nay, verily. The Lord who loves them is giving them grand compensations and great opportunities as well. They are larger receivers than many. They have more of His sanctifying and consoling grace. They are more intimately in fellowship with the Man of Sorrows. They get more frequent secret visits from Him. And they are larger givers too. They reflect more of His graciousness upon all who see their faith and patience and trust. Their daily lives are preachers of the power of Christ to give what is better than 'perfect health,' His own 'perfect peace,' a sweet peace that shines only the more beautifully over lines of pain.

¶ After a severe illness Archdeacon Wilberforce returned to his pulpit and said, 'I will not risk distressing any by even a superficial description of the very serious illness through which the Great Physician has led me. It has pleased God to seal my sonship and assure me of my reception with the scourge of intense and prolonged suffering, during which He never permitted me for one moment to doubt His love, or to forget the powerful words of comfort in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." The furnace of His Fatherly chastening was indeed heated seven-fold, but there was ever with me the presence of the Mystic Fourth (Daniel iii.), whose form is that of the Son of God.' [1]

3. It is not, however, to the weak and sickly alone that life is often only a weariness. There are silent sufferers whose heart-ache few suspect and fewer fully know—that large class on whom has fallen the burden of caring for others too feeble or too thriftless to care for themselves, and whose unceasing, self-sacrificing toil is often very thanklessly received.

When a sudden calamity overtakes a home, or when widowhood leaves an invalid mother helpless under the burden of household provision, and the whole family has to depend upon the energy of an elder daughter, how often the heavy load is laid quite unconcernedly upon the shoulders willing to bear it, without any thought of how this

[1] G. W. E. Russell, *Basil Wilberforce*, 87.

new, unlooked-for, and great responsibility may be utterly blighting that daughter's life. It is looked upon as a matter of course that she should take upon herself the care of all the rest; and nobly often is that duty done. She turns capable hands to everything, and goes about her work in the home with a smiling face, but there is a secret pang in her heart which she never reveals. No one suspects the greatness of the sacrifice she is making for those she loves, or knows that for them she has resigned some treasured hope dearer to her than life. No one notices that she is nailed to a cross. She consecrates herself to unappreciated self-denials, her lot is bound up with thankless souls; and though she does not murmur, it is a daily martyrdom. She goes through it bravely and lovingly, but with a heart-weariness not shown by word or sign, dedicating her best years to unremitting devotion to those who are too selfish to consider how much they exact, and are barely grateful for the service so nobly done. She has the pang of martyrdom without the palm.

Brave, noble hearts! self-sacrificing, self-surrendering, but feeling every day how much the self-surrender costs—how greatly the angels must love them! how kindly the eye of Christ must be bent upon them! and how large will be their recompense in the all-revealing Day! These weary years of self-effacement here, how grandly they will be compensated when all is done!

O thou so weary of thy self-denials,
And fainting so beneath thy little cross!
Is it so hard to bear thy daily trials,
To count all earthly things a gainful loss?

What if thou always suffer tribulation?
What if thy painful heart-aches never cease?
The gaining of the Quiet Habitation
Shall gather thee to Everlasting Peace.

The Purpose of Life.

Heb. xii. 7.—'It is for chastening that ye endure' (RV).

The first clause of this verse is rendered in our Authorized Version: 'If ye endure chastening'; but the Revisers, reading from a text differing only by one letter from the Received Text, translate the clause as a separate principal sentence: 'It is for chastening that ye endure.' The change is of very great interest to the Bible student; for, under its new guise, the clause aspires to be in condensed form a theory of the purpose of life—'it is for chastening that ye endure.'

The word rendered 'endure' may mean no more than 'continue' (with the thought of perseverance). The writer uses it because life to these Hebrews was a peculiarly keen trial of faith. The word 'chastening' also needs explanation. It is the ordinary Greek word for 'education.' Perhaps 'discipline' is the translation which would best conserve the original atmosphere of the word, while introducing the element of sternness which the Christian conception and experience of life demand. And if we read, 'It is for discipline that ye endure,' already something of the sombreness, if not all of the severity, has been eliminated from the sentence. But in point of fact there is nothing to hinder the atmosphere from being lightened still further, nothing to hinder us from accepting the translation, 'It is for education that ye endure.'

Among the Greek philosophers views upon education were prevalent which were greatly in advance of the views held until quite recently among ourselves. In particular there are two directions in which we have lately been modifying our ideas of education, bringing them more into line with ancient Greek ideas. First, the idea has come to be generally accepted that education consists in drawing out the powers of a child or youth, rather than in cramming him with information. That is a salutary reversion to the conception of Plato. And next, the public mind has of late years been impressed by the idea that education involves the development of all the faculties and powers in harmony. The elements into which an old-fashioned philosophy divided up our nature are felt to act and react upon one another; it is felt, therefore, that the nature must be dealt with as a whole. The information and discipline of the mind (once regarded as nearly the whole of education) is now being supplemented by attention to the body, by training in taste, by care of the condition of the moral sensibilities, and so forth. This more comprehensive view of education is also in harmony with the old Greek view. Plato speaks with contempt of head knowledge merely. 'Education in the real sense,' he says, 'is that education in virtue from youth upwards which makes a man eagerly pursue the

ideal perfection of being a perfect citizen, and teaches him both how rightly to rule and how to obey. That is the only education,' he goes on warmly, 'which upon our view deserves the name. The other sort of training, which aims at mere cleverness apart from intelligence and justice, is mean and illiberal, and is not worthy to be called education at all.'

1. Here then, in the rough, is an idea of that education for which, according to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are allowed to 'endure'; it is the calling out into activity, and perfecting in harmony, of every faculty in us—the strengthening and disciplining of the intellectual powers, the stimulating and directing of the sympathies, the reinforcement of conscience, the training of the will, and the due discipline of the body that it may be made the servant of worthy purposes—all with the view of the production of a character marked, as God's is, by the free choice of what is good. It is for this sort of education that we endure; all life is its opportunity and furnishes its material.

(1) It is evident that as we look round upon our life we see much that seems to support this view that things are so ordered as to provide for the training and education of our faculties. Take, for example, the training of our *intellects*. In any department in which we crave knowledge we find, in the scheme of things around us, the facts or forces or ideas with which we shall have to deal so ordered as to provoke and stimulate investigation. We never find them already ordered and classified like the specimens in a museum, but scattered about like wild flowers in a beautiful and tempting chaos—a chaos charged with the potentiality of order. This is equally true whether the realm be that of what we call the natural sciences, or the realm of history, or of the human mind; everywhere there is *prima facie* the same inviting disorder, the same suggestion of the possibility of order—the same summons, therefore, and stimulus to the human intellect.

(2) Or take, again, the training of our *bodies*. We find in point of fact that the disposition and distribution of the resources of nature and the effect of our environment upon us are so arranged as to encourage us to the observance of those practices which make for the preservation of the body in health. Our food, for the most part, comes to us through such conditions as make for the securing, in the discipline of work, of precisely that which is most calculated to make the food useful for the body's development.

(3) Or, once more, take the direction and regulation of our *desires*. We find, as a matter of fact, as life spreads out before and on either side of us, that the facts and observed laws around us do at once so call out desire, yet warn from its immoderate or untimely indulgence, that we find ourselves directly encouraged to the healthful control and regulation of desire.

2. But it is only under the influence of the Christian faith that this conception of life's purpose as educative really flourishes. And the reasons are not far to seek. For one thing, the coming of Christ made much clearer to men the *purpose* of God with human life, and involved especially a revelation of the eternal life in which the purpose is to be fulfilled. In Christ men perceived a new light thrown upon God, upon His design for men, upon the sphere of the fulfilment of that design. When Christ had come, bearing God in upon human life, and illustrating and enforcing in His own programme of work the earnest, age-long solicitude of God ('My Father worketh hitherto, and I work'), there was no longer any doubt among those to whom Christ successfully appealed for allegiance and co-operation that their lives were within the stream of a Divine purpose, and moving to its fulfilment. Plato, despite his enlightenment, was never quite sure whether we were here for a definite purpose, or were simply playthings of the higher powers. But to the Christian who had been baptized into Christ, the heavens had been opened, and the purpose of God revealed. Henceforth life was a school of training, an expectation, a hope; God was dealing with men as with sons. The adulthood was in the glorious hereafter.

It was not Christ's teaching only that wrought this change of view, it was still more His Person. In that Person the purpose of God was illustrated. He contrasted with men, not only as good with sinful, but as perfect with imperfect. In Him those powers were seen in full development which in men labour under imperfection. Intellect was seen in Him in stupendous strength: after twenty

centuries the intellect of Christ is still the wonder of the world. Sympathy was in Him unequalled in range and penetration, yet under perfect control. The will was in Him the equally ready minister of the exercise of power or of power's restraint. The body was wholly the servant of the spirit for holy uses. In these and other ways Christ stood before men the incarnation of the highest results of education, the norm of what man in full development should be.

¶ The personal character of Christ is of an order *sui generis,* and even the most advanced of sceptics have done homage to it. The more keen the intellectual criticism, the greater is the appreciation of the uniqueness of the personality. Men may cease to wonder at the effect of Christ's teaching; for, given the wonderful personality, all the rest must follow. Whatever answers different persons may give to the questions—'What think ye of Christ?', 'Whose son is He?'—everyone must agree that 'His name shall be called Wonderful!'[1]

The Purpose of Discipline.

Heb. xii. 9, 10.—'Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure: but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.'

Few words of Scripture have been oftener than these laid as a healing balm on wounded hearts. They may be long unnoticed on the page, like a lighthouse in calm sunshine, but sooner or later the stormy night falls, and then the bright beam flashes out and is welcome. They go very deep into the meaning of life as discipline; they tell us how much better God's discipline is than that of the most loving and wise of parents, and they give that superiority as a reason for our yielding more entire and cheerful obedience to Him than we do to such.

There is a design in all the discipline of life. The suffering is not purposeless. The design is high and large. Domestic discipline proposes a worldly and temporal end; God designs to educate His children into spiritual and immortal perfection.

1. *Spiritual perfection.*—He is 'the Father of spirits,' and the end of His chastening is 'that we may be partakers of his holiness.' In the school of affliction He perfects our highest nature. What a marvellous thing that the sorrow which comes out of sin should be overruled to its destruction! In medical science the poison of the rattlesnake has been used for the purpose of healing; but the science of God is still more wonderful, for the sorrow created by sin becomes its antidote, working health and life instead of disease and death. Times of severe public tribulation are often points of departure for higher national thought and conduct; suffering purges the Church, and causes it to shine with heightened splendour; whilst trial manifestly softens and refines the individual. The grand design of chastisement is expressed in the two words, 'and live'—life deeper, fuller, purer. Michelet points out that in hot countries the furious insects which attack the wild cattle in reality save their lives by driving them to the higher lands; the flocks become feeble and sickly in the swampy, feverish lowlands; but when, trembling and bleeding, they fly from their stinging persecutors to the fresh air and living waters of the hills, their persecutors leave them. Thus our sorrows drive us from relaxing and dangerous lagoons to those table-lands where the air is sweet and bracing, and God himself is sun and moon. Let us, then, be subject to Him who through the discipline of suffering imparts to our spirits the strength, purity, and beauty of His own.

> The sharpest smart
> Which human patience may endure
> Pays light for that which leaves the heart
> More generous, dignified and pure.[1]

2. *Immortal perfection* is designed by the discipline of God. 'They verily for a few days chastened us.' The earthly parent sought to fit us 'for a life which is made up of a few days,' whilst God trains us for an endless life. How often we forget the great future in our judgment of the present! Pessimists declare that, considering all the miseries of mankind, it would have been better had the earth, like the moon, remained a big cinder and never known a tenant. Is it not too soon to give such a verdict? Geologists and evolutionists are ever recounting the ages of the

[1] *Life and Letters of G. J. Romanes*, 227.

[1] Coventry Patmore.

past; but what of the ages to come in which we shall be actors! Let us wait and see what roses these thorns will bear, what coronations will close these conflicts, what transfigurations reward these crucifixions. 'Considering the miseries of the race, I reckon that it would have been better for the earth to have remained a mass of slag, idle and void of life,' moans the pessimist. 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward,' exults the Apostle. Depend upon it that the arithmetic of the latter will prove true. How much reason have we for quiet submission to trial when we remember God's vast outlook! Years have to pass before we comprehend the discipline of youth; and so in some other world and far-off age shall we understand the Divine motive that underlies the mysterious treatment of to-day.

Those who have read Harold Begbie's *Life of William Booth* will remember the two years' awful suffering through which Mrs. Booth passed before the end came. After describing with painful detail the progress of the disease, Begbie says: 'It is not to be wondered at that William Booth, being an honest man, cried out to Heaven for an explanation of this trial. His faith never once deserted him; but again and again his theology seemed to break in his hands. God, who had the power, refused to act. God, who bids us pray, refused to answer. God, who promises joy to the believer, "sent" to this holy and beautiful saint agony as intolerable as it was hideous.

Mrs. Booth refused morphia, largely on religious grounds; and William Booth, who implored her to relent, was therefore forced to witness her quite conscious struggles with this indescribable anguish. Again and again, Bramwell Booth tells me, his father broke down utterly when he came from his wife's room, to take up the accumulating burden of his work. "I don't understand it! I don't understand it!" he would cry out, and covering his face with his hands, he would walk to and fro in an excess of grief, or throw himself upon his knees and implore the Almighty for help.'[1]

[1] H. Begbie, *Life of William Booth*, ii. 105.

Afterwards.

Heb. xii. 11.—'Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.'

When we take short views of life, there is danger of our judging God and His ways with men as though the only available data for a right reading of His character and work were the experience of the present. When we are taken up with things close at hand, whether of pain or of pleasure, we are apt to lose a sense of proportion and perspective. It is thus that a spirit of resentment against God's doings—as though they were not equal—is generated; which, almost more than any other attitude toward Him, is disastrous in its recoil upon the soul.

God's ways are intelligible to His people only in the light of their ultimate purpose. Hence the value of cultivating the long view of life. For we are not mere children of time, but of Eternity. Beyond the horizon toward which we journey is the land—not of the sunset, but of the sunrise. When the noise and smoke and din of war have all blown away there will yet unfold before our gaze the fair land of peace. The Potter's House, in which the clay is moulded by pressure of his hand, is not our dwelling-place. It is only a halt on the way to the King's Palace, where vessels meet for the Master's use will find their true service. We are not for ever to be on the looms amid the flying shuttles and intersecting threads of mystifying providences. The schoolroom, where, under the discipline of perfect Love and Wisdom, our lessons are so often sent back to us to be relearned, is not life's final goal. We are merely being fitted there for the strenuous service of Christ's Empire. Therefore, while there is no suggestion that the present should be disregarded, there is strong reason why we should not unduly dwell upon it. Indeed, we cannot escape the present even if we would; its pain and perplexity press too hard upon us for that. But we must beware of the shortsightedness of those who forget that they have been cleansed from their old sins, and have thus within themselves an experience of miracle which is prophetic of Christ's ultimate enthronement and supremacy over all.

John Stuart Mill says his father considered that the majority of miscarriages in life were attribut-

able to the over-valuing of pleasure. It is a plain fact, at any rate, that men and women are capable of shutting their eyes to all considerations of the future, in order to gratify the sudden passion of the moment. They lack self-control largely because they lack imagination. They have no sense of perspective, morally.

1. 'Thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.' Thus does Christ inculcate the long view of life in regard to personal discipleship. Ere St. Peter can follow him fully, as his heart desires, he must come to understand the fact of his own weakness, to recognize the instability of his own purpose, and to accept the humiliating truth of the inadequacy of his own energy. This can only be as he is brought into conflict with a strength of temptation before which he utterly breaks down. In that hour of self-discovery he learns, in a spirit of humility to which he has hitherto been a stranger, how his ideals can alone be realized.

So, too, it is with us. Worsted as we often are in unequal contest with forces we cannot master, we come at last to an end of ourselves, and admit that in us dwells no good thing. That is one of the great hours of life for us. For it is then that Christ's assurance—'thou shalt follow me afterwards'—comes both to save us from despair and to encourage us to new and better beginnings. Having learned our weakness, we are thankful to link ourselves in utter self-abandonment to His Almighty power. Convinced of our own insufficiency, we now cling closely to Him who alone can lead us to victory. We are at last upon the Path of Life. This is the interpretation of the painful discovery of tendencies, disloyalties, and surprising moral contrasts which we constantly find within ourselves as the result of temptation. For spiritual processes are never completed here, and to the end the uncharted regions of our being will be brought to light in this way.

2. 'Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.' Thus, also, in respect of discipline as of discipleship, we need to cultivate the long view. There is nothing quite so blinding as the experiences of sorrow and disappointment which are Love's veiled sacrament of discipline to the soul. When God so deals with us—never for His own pleasure but always for our profit, that we may become partakers of His holiness—we are in danger of forgetting the preparatory character of life. For we are not yet in a state of being, but of becoming. The short view impoverishes by taking the mystery out of life, and with the mystery the hope also. Let us be certain that any explanation of experience which does not relate it to Eternity is false. There is a despotism of the immediate which breeds self-pity that must be resisted at all costs. For to pity ourselves is to lose every moral value of God's providential handling of our affairs. The short view of life arouses an almost angry spirit of self-justification which puts us hopelessly out of touch with God, when His every voice is calling us closer to Him. This is essentially one of the perils of the believer to-day.

These are wise words of Dr Parker: 'We must not interfere with the Divine punctuation of the literature of Providence; we must allow God to put in the stops; and only when God has put in the full stop, at the close of the long sentence, are we in a position to judge His work, or form an opinion as to its scope and meaning.' Let us wait for the 'full stop,' and look away to the blessed '*afterwards.*'

3. 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.' The guided life is not always gilded with bright sunshine, nor is the life protected by the faithful counsel of God always peaceful. Indeed, it often appears as though a loyal following of His direction only brings us into fiercer conflict and darker gloom. The scorn of the world inevitably falls upon him who makes the good pleasure of God the guiding principle of his actions. Other-worldliness evokes sharp opposition on the part of those who dwell in Vanity Fair; nor do they fail to make life hard for the one whose ideals condemn their frivolity. Happy as are the hours he spends in the Interpreter's House, the only pathway he can take thence leads through the Valley of Humiliation and to conflict with Apollyon.

To say that the guidance of God is at times perplexing is but to express all too feebly the consciousness of those who seek to take His way. And here again it is the long view of life which

saves them from bewilderment and despair. There is an 'afterward' of glory to which all the present guidance of grace is bringing us. The certainty of its end makes the toil of the upward pathway seem as nothing. For since it is His counsel alone which we follow, the ultimate realization of our every hope, and the satisfaction of our every instinct, are never for a moment in doubt. His nature is our ultimate certainty of the 'afterward' which has become the glowing horizon of our soul's vision. It is when this great light of Eternity, flashing from the City that lieth four-square, falls upon every common hour of time, and when we walk in that brightness, that our hearts are stablished and strengthened to do and to bear.

Here the chilly waters, but afterwards the golden strand;
Here the cold grave, but afterwards the warm sun of life:
Here the dark way, but afterwards the shining vista;
Here we are hungry, but afterwards we shall hunger no more;
Here we are thirsty, but afterwards fountains of living water;
Here we have tears, but afterwards laughter and joy:
Here we have mourning, but afterwards song:
Here the sheep go astray, but afterwards one fold and one shepherd;
Here we sow with weeping, but afterwards golden Harvest;
Here we face death, but afterwards Resurrection and life;
Here all things are dim and misty and dark, but there
We shall dwell in unclouded light, face to face with God.

The Treatment of the Weak.

Heb. xii. 12, 13.—'Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.'

THIS passage may be taken to mean, 'It is better to reform the erring than to extinguish them.' There are two methods by which the road may be cleared of the lame—either by turning them out of the way or by healing their lameness. The first is the drastic method. It would purify the air by killing those who are diseased; it would starve the leper and the Magdalene. The second is the method of Christ. It would lift up the hands that hang down and re-animate the feeble knees. The first was the world's method—the Roman method. It said of every unpromising tree, 'Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?' But the second said, 'Wait till I have digged round about it; pause till I have tried the effect of a better environment! I would rather have it healed than killed.'

¶ A gentleman from one of the most salubrious British colonies once complained that the climate of his country was too genial, for it allowed diseased emigrants to live on and reproduce their kind. And it is sometimes said of the Church that it encourages the unfit and the infirm. If it produces weaklings it is to be blamed, but if it succours those who are already defective and incapable, this is its best praise. It is the glory of a Church, not so much to set forth a statuesque perfection of character in its children, as to be always helping the maimed, the downcast, the handicapped.

1. There will always be among Christ's disciples those who are weak-handed, feeble-kneed, and lame; some permanently and constitutionally affected with feebleness and infirmity; and now and again a strong one maimed, injured by extreme and undue exposure, or crippled by some untoward accident. It was so among these Hebrew Christians. Intimidated by persecution, disheartened by the spoiling of their goods, shaken by the arguments of unbelief, several grew less steadfast in their confession of Christ, others were perplexed and confused, and some were just on the verge of deserting and abandoning the faith. Among us there is no more imprisoning, goods spoiling, or persecution to stagger our faith in Christ, but there is instead a whole world of seductions, of discouragements, of mockeries, and of unbelieving sneers. Still, too, there are with us the weak, the maimed, the misled; many who never have attained to much spirituality or consistency; others who for a time went well, but became entangled in the mazes of the world's sinful attractions, or were overtaken by sudden temptation, enfeebled by persistent opposition and

ridicule, paralysed by difficulties, disappointments, doubts, or unbelief.

2. How are we to treat such weaker brethren? The text very plainly implies that we are not to cast them off, but to compassionate them and seek to recover them. Nay, mere human kindness would require the same. As soldiers seek to rescue, not to slay, a comrade well-nigh carried off by the foe, so surely we Christians should not attack, but strive to regain, a brother captured in the meshes of temptation or unbelief. And no doubt to a very large extent true Christians do act so, though not with that unvarying pitifulness which ought to extend the same charity to all. Do we not make unrighteous differences, leaving room for restoration to some of the erring, and closing heart and door against others? Partly from thoughtlessness, partly from prejudice, partly from contempt of what is weakness or cowardice, there are some falling, straying souls whom we treat too much like those evil animals that, whenever one of the herd is wounded or crippled, fall upon the victim and tear him to pieces. When we have heard of a brother falling, doubting, denying, have we not sometimes felt only angry reprobation; have we not uttered sharp, cruel, merciless words of final condemnation and irretrievable doom? Do we not often treat erring ones so? It is very natural, for these feeble-handed, weak-kneed, crippled ones are an eye-sore, unpleasant to do with, a discredit to the Church, and the most convenient plan is to cast them off. Nevertheless, it is most inhuman, most unchristian, and can only spring from one of two errors. It may be that you do not have that fraternal love for all your brethren in Christ which you ought to have. When your brother after the flesh, or your son, catches a deadly complaint (it may be through his own recklessness and disobedience), or is wounded by some hostile assault, you do not in anger cast him out to die, for you love him. Would God we had more love among Christians! Or the reason of your harsh treatment is that you mistake your straying, doubting brother for an enemy, and fail to see that he is a victim. Of course there is a great distinction between one of Christ's little ones swept into doubt, and a hostile, malignant unbeliever, seeking to harm the flock. This last you must indeed oppose, and seek to drive out of the fold, though even then you will feel for him as our Lord did when He wept over Jerusalem, and on the cross prayed, 'Father, forgive them.' But it is not of such we speak now, only of those who are themselves not wolves, but wounded, wandered sheep. Remember, therefore, that they are your brethren, and pity and help them.

He who was so strong Himself was ever of the quickest tenderness both to the griefs and to the weaknesses of others: and this is just the test that we must apply to ourselves if we would know whether it is indeed God who is sustaining us, whether there is no hardness mingling with our strength. And the more we feel that it is part of our fellowship with Him to meet our life with cheerful energy, and, except in a spirit of loving sympathy, to carry our burden to no man's door, to shadow no man's tenderness of heart by the needless exposure of a grief which with God's help we can quell within our own—the more we are impressed by the spiritual duty of standing up in this troubled world, with the arrows of God flying all around us, trustful and hopeful men—the more shall we be ready to become the supports of whatever sorrows need our sympathies, to grasp the hands that hang down and raise them up, to place ourselves in love and self-forgetfulness near the weak and the desolate. We can give only what we have: we cannot give to another the strength that is not our own. 'Labour,' says St. Paul, 'that ye may have to give to him that needeth.' 'Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.'

3. How does the text suggest that you are to render them assistance and support? Suppose it is a brother becoming involved in worldly or dangerous entanglements, lapsing into doubtful courses, or yielding to the freezing influence of ungodly or sceptical companions. Now, direct interference, immediate intervention, is often difficult, and it is sometimes impossible. Besides, often the mischief is already done ere you perceive it. Or, again, it is intellectual difficulty or doubt that you have to deal with. To meet the objections, to remove the doubts, would be

well, but perhaps you are not competent to do that; or it may be they are such as cannot be removed. Here again direct remedies may be impracticable. Are you, then, powerless, helpless to aid? Far from it. A method better than all immediate and special action lies open for you, for all Christian men and women. 'Make straight, smooth paths with your feet.' It may be you cannot personally do anything to support the maimed or arrest the erring, but you can nevertheless render most important service. A flock of sheep, by all moving on regularly in one united mass, smooth down with their feet the roughness and entanglements of the way, break down the entrapping brambles, clear away the furze and tripping briers, and leave behind them a plain and open track, trodden down and freed of obstructions, stones, and stumbling blocks, so that the weak and crippled are not turned aside or overthrown. Similarly, if the strong whole body of Christian men and women will but move steadfastly on amid the mazes of temptation and over the stumbling-stones of evil, the feeble, tempted, and erring will be helped forward, and, borne along in the united combined advance, will not fall behind or be baffled, overthrown, or led astray by difficulties and impediments. Infinitely more powerful than any isolated rebuke, or warning, or intervention, is the force of united Christian example and protecting aid, to keep in the right path the halt, the maimed, the blind. What the tempted, the world-seduced, the doubting, the unbelieving need is not rebukes, cautions, exhortations, refutations, objections. What they need is to be drawn out of the cold, freezing world of evil and doubt into the warm, living, breathing atmosphere of loving Christian fellowship; to be surrounded by the resistless progression in rectitude, in faith and love, of Christlike, God-fearing souls. With blows of reprimand and logical argument you may pound and break the ice of sin and unbelief, but though broken, it remains cold winter ice, freezing still. Bring it into the summer radiance, the golden sunshine of warm Christian life; then it will be melted away, and the hard heart will grow soft and tender in the breath of the all-quickening Spirit.

¶ 'It is New Testament to accept sinning humanity, not leave them in outer darkness with the devil. We should never ask men to change their lives, their way of living, but pour grace into their hearts and their way of living would change of itself. Keep the impure and the drunken and the murderous and dishonest at least *in the Church*. Not outside it. Don't try to reform them, but give them a heavenly Father who loves them however much they have suffered and sinned —and then all you wish will follow. . . . I would say even to the most abased woman: "Don't be afraid to be tender even to the brute who treats you like dirt. Love is the greatest saviour. Love solves all problems."' [1]

Esau's Character.

Heb. xii. 16.—'Lest there be any . . . profane person, as Esau.'

THERE are certain features of character which, if they do not exactly enlist our admiration, never fail to secure our good will, and an instinctive sympathy with those who possess them. They are not of necessity the noblest, and, though sometimes allied with these and found in their company, are just as frequently found without them. Indeed, it is this that gives them much of their popularity. Excellence of the highest type repels more than it attracts. It makes us too conscious of our own inferiority. What we like best is an average quantity of goodness. The piety that carries about with it a large capacity for accommodation, and can square itself well with the world when occasion calls, is the most popular piety. The man who along with his virtues, which by reason of their very nature lift him above many of his fellows, combines a few of those failings which bring him down again to their level, is by far the greatest favourite. Good men are glad to acknowledge his goodness, and for the sake of it are disposed to deal gently with his inconsistencies. The multitude find that they, too, have a share in him, and are pleased to recognize their own features in such respectable and perhaps unusual company.

Esau was such a man. Probably everybody likes him better than Jacob. But for all that he failed in life, and for that failure there are two chief reasons. The first is that he never learned self-control. He was always at the mercy of his impulses. He lived in the feelings of the moment. And the second reason is what the text calls his

[1] Stephen Graham, *Priest of the Ideal*, 265.

'profanity.' 'A profane person, as Esau.' By profanity is meant a living wholly on that side of our life on which we touch the animals, to the neglect of that side on which we may touch God; and so, when choice has to be made, a preference for the lower over the higher, for the things of sense over the things of the spirit. It was profanity in Esau to surrender his birthright, with all that it implied in religious privilege and responsibility, for a mere meal.

1. Esau was impulsive. We pardon a man a great deal for the sake of this particular temperament. It removes him from the run of his fellows, and from the rules which we are accustomed to apply to them. If he does what is wrong, it mitigates the wrong that it was done on the spur of the moment, and not by a cool, deliberating wickedness. If he does what is good, it makes the good still better, because goodness that acts spontaneously is more genuine than a habitual calculating virtue. Besides, we give more latitude to impulsive actions, because they break through the routine of things. We view them with an indulgent curiosity, and forgive much for the sake of the excitement and variety they provide. It is not everyone who can afford to travel faster than his neighbours, or discard the ordinary methods of safe locomotion; and allowance must be made for those who run the risk. Hence the popularity of what is vulgarly called 'dash,' a quality we all naturally admire. It serves as a sort of flourish that relieves the monotony of life. And we watch any singular display of it as a man watches a game of chance, knowing there may be some brilliant successes, but just as likely some ruinous catastrophe. The character of Esau, as it is brought before us in Scripture, partakes largely of this element. He was an impulsive man. He acted, that is, at the bidding of the desire that was strongest at the moment, and his desires rose with overpowering violence. Disappointment or delay they could not brook. Anything that came in the way only aggravated their strength, and was spurned with a reckless disregard of consequences. When he returns hungry from the hunt his birthright is thrown away for a single mess of pottage. Bereft of the blessing of the firstborn, he breaks out into loud uncontrollable grief, which passes into equally vehement hatred of the brother who has thwarted him. But he is capable of warm and generous affection. The very strength of his remorse reveals the depth of his emotions. There is something indescribably touching, too, in his eager warm welcome of Jacob on his return from Mesopotamia. He 'ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.' He could show a lordly magnanimity, as on the same occasion, when he wished to refuse his brother's gift on the plea of his already having enough.

The weakness of impulsive goodness is that no firm dependence can be placed upon it. And then, again, impulses are not always on the side of goodness; are apt, indeed, not to be. We have a strange way of speaking about faults into which we are led by impulse. We say, 'My tongue ran away with me,' or 'My temper got the better of me,' or 'The inclination was too strong for me'; just as though it were the most natural thing in the world for a man, made in the image of God, to be haled hither and thither by tongue or temper and overcome by chance desires. Whereas the very prerogative of a human being, what distinguishes him from the lower animals, is that he should not be at the mercy of impulses. God's distinctive gift to man is the gift of will, that power by which we, and we alone among all the creatures of God, can say, 'I will do this; that I will not do.'

2. But Esau was also a profane man. Now by a profane man is meant one who has no perception of the sanctity of Divine things. Sacred ground in his eyes is just the same as any other, the surrounding fence that withdraws it from common use being quite invisible. Instead of taking his shoes off his feet before entering its precincts, he carries into it the dust and traffic of the highway, and soils it with the stains of earthliness. But this profaneness simply describes the selfish man's character on that side of it which is turned towards God. The disposition which towards man is selfish is towards God profane. It cannot be otherwise. Nothing is sacred to a selfish man except himself. All is sacrificed to the absorbing idol of his own will. To this everything must bow and do homage; and it secures respect or toleration only inasmuch as it does so. Should it happen to stand out, and refuse sub-

mission, it is the object of perpetual assault. The will of the man chafes and frets against it, every instance of contact increasing the irritation, and provoking murmuring and protest that will never cease till it wears itself out in self-exhaustion, or till the obnoxious obstacle is overcome. But to acknowledge God, if it means anything at all, is to acknowledge a will superior to our own, one that rises up in impregnable strength and inflexible righteousness, one that will not 'bend with the remover to remove' or accommodate itself to our varying weakness. And thus it is that the most elementary acts of the religious life, whether of worship or of obedience, are impossible to the man who is governed by selfishness. Every such act implies the abnegation of self. It is out of the death of this repugnant principle that the life of the soul awakens. And every beat and stirring of its pulse, every outgoing of its energy is a suppression of our original impulse, and a triumph over its strength. It is easy, then, to see how the selfish man is profane. He has no such respect for God as moves him to obedience. He removes religion out of his way as a serious hindrance, or shuts it up within a compass so narrow that it never comes into collision with himself. What else can he do, if it only thwarts and annoys him? If it gives him no pleasure, and adds nothing to his resources, is it to be expected that it should be found anywhere except amid the lumber of his life?

This charge R. H. Hutton seems to bring against Goethe in his essay on 'Goethe and his Influence.' 'Goethe,' he says, 'deliberately turned his back upon those inroads which sin and death make into our natural habits and routine. From the pleading griefs, from the challenging guilt, from the warning shadows of his own past life, he turned resolutely away, like his own Faust, to the alleviating occupations of the present. Inch by inch he contested the inroads of age upon his existence, striving to banish the images of new graves from his thoughts long before his nature had ceased to quiver with the shock of parting; never seemingly for a moment led by grief to take conscious refuge in the love of God and his hopes of an hereafter.'[1]

[1] R. H. Hutton, *Literary Essays*, 88.

Esau's Repentance.

Heb. xii. 17.—'He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.'

THE expression 'he found no place of repentance' does not mean 'he found no place where he could repent'; it means he found no field on which such repentance as he had could operate—so as to undo that which was past. His repentance did not alter the fixed destination of the blessing. His repentance, his change of mind as to the worth of the thing thrown away, and as to his own conduct in despising it, did not bring the thing back again to him. His tears did not obliterate what was done. He wished that it had been otherwise, but his wishes were vain.

And that is the lesson which this text as it stands is intended to teach us. We are pointed back to that tragic picture of Esau, weeping, wringing his hands in the wild passion of his uncultured nature, when the blessing, seen to be desirable too late, had vanished from his convulsive grasp. And the lesson that is taught us is just this old solemn one. There may come in your life a time when the scales will fall from your eyes, and you will see how insignificant and miserable are the present gratifications for which you have sold your birthright, and may wish the bargain undone which cannot be undone. You cannot wash out bitter memories, you cannot blot out habits by a wish. Tears will not alter the irrevocable, you cannot avert consequences that fall upon a man—the consequences of a lifetime—by any weeping and wringing of your hands, and by any wish that they should disappear. 'What I have written I have written,' said Pilate, and in tragic sense it is true about many a man who at the end looks back upon many 'a line which, dying, he would wish to blot,' but which stands ineffaceable, not to be scratched out by any of your penknives, unless you can cut out the substance of the soul on which it is written.

> The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
> Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
> Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.[1]

The past stands—'Whatsoever a man soweth,

[1] Omar Khayyam, *The Ruba'iyat*, lxxi.

that shall he also reap.' Any man, at any moment of his earthly career, may find, if he seeks for it, the mercy of the Lord which bringeth salvation. But the salvation which comes to a man who has all his life been giving himself up to earth, and limiting his views and moulding his character by the present and its contemptible objects, will not be as large, as full, as blessed in many a respect, as the salvation which might have been his, if at an early stage in his life, with his character still to mould, and his memory still unwritten with evil, he had turned himself to his God and found peace in the blood of Jesus Christ. Maimed and marred in a thousand ways—having memories which burn and sting; having habits which it will be hard to fight against; with the marks of the gyves upon his wrists; and his eyes unaccustomed to the daylight (like the prisoner who came out of the Bastille after a lifetime of imprisonment there, and wanted to go back again because he could not bear freedom and sunshine)—many a man brought to God near the end of his days feels that it is not all the same whether a lifetime has been spent in the temple service, or in the foul haunts of vice and debauchery.

Now these words do not teach that a man may desire to repent with tears and be unable to do so. That is to assert a stark staring contradiction. For if a man desire to repent he must have changed his views as to the conduct of which he desires to repent, and that change of view is the repentance which he desires. Nor do the words teach the cognate thought which has sometimes been deduced from them, that a man may desire to receive the salvation of his soul from God, and may not receive it. The way of reconciliation is open, ever open; no outward conditions bar the door of return; let the heart but begin to turn to God in sorrow and self-abasement, let the soul begin to respond to that infinite love which Jesus Christ revealed to the world, and instantly and inevitably the penalty begins to pass away. It is not that, on condition of repentance, the sinner's Judge may possibly remit his stripes; repentance is itself the arresting of the hand that wields the lash, the exchange of a remorseful, self-accusing, self-tormenting spirit for the inward satisfaction and peace of a spirit whose very sorrow shows that already it has begun to be on the side of righteousness. It is not that, possibly, if we have not incensed our Judge too deeply for re-admission to His presence, the sentence of banishment may on our repentance be reversed. The first throb of true spiritual feeling, the first sigh of a contrite heart, is itself the sign that its fetters are falling, that the bonds of its moral imprisonment are being broken. It was inward hardness and estrangement, not spatial distance, that kept it away from God; and the melting of the hardness, the hatred and horror of sin and yearning after goodness of which the penitent soul is conscious, is the proof that already, as by an inward moral gravitation, it is turning back to the bosom of Eternal Love.

¶ All torn asunder, all annihilated, Francis cast himself on his face before God, the God who had made heaven and earth, the God who is all truth and all holiness, and before whose omnipotence nothing can stand without complete truth, complete holiness. Francis looked into the depths of his being, and he saw that on the whole earth there was not to be found a more useless creature, a greater sinner, a soul more lost and fallen to the bad, than himself, and from the depths of his need he groaned before God: 'Lord, be merciful to me, a poor sinner!'

And it came to pass that the empty cave over Poggio Bustone beheld a miracle, one that always happens when a soul in complete distrust of itself calls out to its God in confidence and hope and charity—then there comes to pass the great miracle of *justification*. 'I fear everything from my badness, but from thy goodness I also hope for all'—this was the innermost meaning of the prayer Francis sent up to God. And the answer came, as it always comes—'Fear not, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee!'[1]

The cry of Esau was very piteous; it draws tears from us now. 'Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.' That cry was reluctantly, grudgingly answered—an inferior blessing was found for him, but it told only of a warfare renewing itself through the ages, and an occasional opportunity of a retaliation which was no conquest. But that cry, as it goes up now from a thousand sorrowful hearts to the Father of the spirits of all flesh, is never unheard, never grudgingly or reluctantly answered, when it asks, not for an earthly Canaan, and not for a human superiority, and not for the 'something' and the

[1] J. Jörgensen, *St. Francis of Assisi*, 73.

'someone' of worldly renown, but for the blessing, as Jesus Christ has interpreted it, of a soul at peace with God, a Father's love here, and a Father's home hereafter. I may have forfeited by my manifold sins, or, let us say, by some one terrible sin, a high place, a firstborn's share, among saints in light—I may have made it impossible for myself ever to rise high, I say not on earth, but even among the saved—yet hast thou not reserved a blessing, the last and least be it, even for me? Not worthy to be a son, make me a hireling in Thy great household. 'I had rather be a doorkeeper there than a prince in the tents of ungodliness. Me, me also, even me, take Thou, O Father, within the tabernacle of Thy presence. Hast Thou not said, shalt Thou not make it good; 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones'? In that heaven, so peopled—in that presence, so revealed—with that 'reviving,' so effectual—'bless me, even me also, O my Father.'

The City of God.

Heb. xii. 22.—'Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.'

Long ago there were a few Jewish Christians who felt just as a girl feels when the component parts of her dearest doll suddenly fall asunder, just as Samuel Johnson felt when the talisman prophesied falsely, just as Oliver Wendell Holmes felt when he saw that he could trust his oracle no more. They felt—those Hebrew believers—that everything had gone from them. 'To how great splendour,' says Dr. Meyer, 'had they been accustomed—marble courts, throngs of white-robed Levites, splendid vestments, the state and pomp of symbol, ceremonial and choral psalm! And to what a contrast were they reduced—a meeting in some hall, or school, with the poor, afflicted, and persecuted members of a despised and hated sect!' But the writer of the Epistle addressed to them makes it his—or her—principal aim to point out that it is all a mistake. Just as a girl's richest romance follows upon the disillusionment of the terrible sawdust, so the wealthiest spiritual heritage of these Jewish Christians had come to them in place of their former lament. 'For,' says the writer, 'ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.' The step from Moses to Christ had been in every respect a step forward and upward. Everything which they had appeared to lose in forsaking Moses had been more than recovered in finding Christ. And first of all the advantages is named the city of God.

The city of God is called *Mount Zion*, in contrast with Sinai, the rugged desert mountain of the law-giving, where God sat on the distant heights, inaccessible, shrouded from a sinful people in awe and grandeur, girt with angels of lightning, and flame; where a fiery law went out from Him, 'and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.' You 'are not come' to that place of meeting, but 'to Zion,' where He dwells as One gracious, approachable, affable, the King amidst His people, the Shepherd with His flock, 'inhabiting the praises of Israel,'—'whither the tribes go up, the tribes of Jehovah,' and 'every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.'

Zion speaks of a God reconciled and delighting in the sons of men, the Friend and Father of His people. The contrast between the two renowned summits typifies the difference of the two dispensations proceeding from them, the quality and temper and atmosphere of the religions of Moses and of Jesus respectively.

And to 'the city of *the living God*' we come. No dumb, sightless block is He, no empty name or formula of the creed, but a God veritable and real. His presence we feel by every inner sense, His breath is the Spirit of our spirits, His word is our soul's aliment; the firmament is His handiwork. 'Having life in himself,' as Jesus said of the Father, God is the spring of life to His creatures, and fellowship with Him is life eternal. The living God, as Jesus reasoned, is 'the God of the living': and all the dead who are His 'live unto him.' His Zion is no city of dying men, with

funerals pacing its streets and graveyards encircling its walls; it is the city of the living One, where there is 'no more death, neither sorrow nor crying.'

So it is called the *heavenly Jerusalem,* of which that famous earthly Jerusalem in the days of its glory was to Israelite faith the noblest symbol. All the glorious and rapturous things said in the spirit of prophecy about David's city have their fulfilment in the new Jerusalem, the eternal city of our God and His Christ, the goal of our forefathers' struggling pilgrimage, the bright ideal of all high and holy thought, earth's Utopia and heaven's sure reality. 'Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth,' we may well say, is this 'Mount Zion . . . the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge.'

This is the place towards which the patriarchs journeyed in their lonely wanderings, whose battlements they saw gleaming in unearthly splendour above the hills of Canaan; for they desired 'a better, a heavenly country,' they 'looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose architect and constructor is God.' This is the place from which our Saviour came and to which He has returned, the Father's house of many mansions. This is the home of the whole family in heaven and earth which knows God for its Father through Jesus Christ. The city of the saints has 'no temple,' for indeed it is all temple; God is in every part of it, and the common has become sacred; all its work is worship. In its lower courts we now wait and serve; its higher glories we shall see when we have passed, following our Forerunner, within the veil.

¶ It was at the time when the hordes of the North rose in search of wider rule, climbed the Alpine heights in teeming crowds, and flowed down like a mighty river over the fair fields of Italy, reached the gates of Rome, captured and sacked the city itself, and struck horror through the Europe of that day by their deeds—it was then that Augustine, away yonder in North Africa, set himself to the task of writing out his thoughts of the City of God so that he might encourage the troubled believers with the assurance that out of the ashes of the Roman city there would spring up a Church that would be more beautiful than that which had been destroyed, a Church which he identifies with the Kingdom of God, but a Church which he describes as realizing the purpose of God in the redemption of humanity. So let us sing in this day with Whittier:—

> If for the age to come, this hour
> Of trial hath vicarious power,
> And, blest by thee, our present pain
> Be liberty's eternal gain,
> Thy will be done.

Myriads of Angels.

Heb. xii. 22.—'Ye are come to . . . innumerable hosts of angels' (RV).

'INNUMERABLE hosts of angels'—more literally 'myriads of angels,' as the margin of the Revised Version tells us. In coming to Jesus and His gospel ye are come, says the writer, to myriads of angels. Is it not strange that a doctrine so clearly laid stress on in Scripture, yes, and, we may also say, so consistent with religious philosophy, as the doctrine of angels—is it not strange that that doctrine has so little real hold on us? For it is most scriptural. All through the sacred history, from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is full of the thought of angels—the glimmer of their garments, the rustle of their wings. Why this unconsciousness of privilege? Why this indifference to facts? Is it the idea, present though unexpressed, that, though association with the angels existed once, it exists no longer now? We live in a world more dull. We travel in ways more prosaic.

¶ Do you believe in fairies, Mac?' asked Allan Cunningham of a Celtic friend of his. 'Indeed, I'm not very sure,' was the reply; 'but do you believe in them yourself, Mr Cunningham?' 'I once did,' replied the burly poet, 'and I would to God I did so still, for mountain and moor have lost much of their charm to me since my faith in their existence has departed.' He then quoted Campbell's beautiful lines:

> When science from creation's face
> Enchantment's veil withdraws,
> What lovely visions yield their place
> To cold material laws.

And so to-night if I were to ask, 'Do you believe in angels?' I think there are some here would give Allan Cunningham's reply. 'I once did,' you would say with a great wistfulness, 'and I would to God I did so still.' In the church in Thurso,

where I began my ministry, we used to enter the pulpit through red curtains, and I often noticed a little child in front, gazing very intently at these curtains. She thought that behind these curtains there was heaven; she thought that the preacher came right out of heaven; and every time the curtains moved a little, she looked for the flashing of the wings of angels. Poor child! she has had many a sorrow since, and she has ceased to look for the angels long ago. She has learned that what she took for heaven once is only a dusty loft with spiders' webs in it. And if you asked her, 'Do you believe in angels?' I daresay she might reply like Allan Cunningham, 'I once did, and I would to God I did so still.'[1]

1. We are come to 'myriads of angels, the festal assembly and church of the firstborn enrolled in heaven' (for these words are perhaps best construed as relating all of them to the blessed angels of God's presence). These are, in comparison with us, 'first-born' sons of Zion, heirs of glory who kept their first estate and whose names stand foremost in the registers of heaven. Often do we see them in the Old Testament, strong soldier-angels of the Lord of Hosts, ranged in militant squadrons or speeding from land to land, from world to world, on errands of mercy or judgment. But they appear in this vision gathered as on some high festival in one vast glorious 'congregation' before the throne of God and of the Lamb. It is a picture drawn from the festal assemblies of Israel that is presented to us. And it appears that our public congregations and anniversary gatherings are, in some sort, a copy of the things in the heavens. Like all that is noble and delightful in man's earthly life, these high celebrations have their counterpart in the worlds above us.

2. 'But we cannot see them,' says one who doubts. 'We cannot see them.' And science that ransacks the universe makes it certain they are not there to be seen. In the farthest nooks, through all the subtlest ether, it has not detected an angel—not the vanishing train of an angel's garment, not the lingering echo of an angel's voice. But what has science to do with the matter? Can the material reveal the immaterial, the instruments of sense the realities of spirit? There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy. The telescope reveals the worlds. But the God that has made the worlds, what telescope has ever shown the image of Him? The scalpel reveals the tissues. But the life that quickens the tissues, what scalpel has ever pierced to that?

'Which of the angels would you most like to see?' So a profound theologian asked who thought much and talked much on the deep things of grace—the late Professor Duncan of Edinburgh. 'I know,' he continued, 'which I want to see.' 'Tell me,' said his hearer. The answer was profound and impressive. 'Not Michael, the angel of zeal—zeal for God's glory; not Gabriel, the angel of announcement—announcement of God's purpose. No, but the angel that strengthened Christ in His agony—the gratitude of a world to *him*.'

3. In the employments of Christian worship we are united with the angels, our wise, kind, holy elder brothers 'that excel in strength,' heaven's immortals and God's 'first-born' in relation to ourselves. They are our friends and ministers, not ashamed to call us brethren for His sake, our Lord and theirs, whom with all their sinless nature and splendid powers they most perfectly love and adore. In coming to Mount Zion we are in communion with 'myriads of angels'; and it is good for us to believe in them, good to think of them and to imagine their presence near us. In the highest moods of worship, in the deepest experiences of Christian fellowship, we are but a little lower than they and 'come near' to them. And Christ has said that His saints will be on a level with them one day: 'Those who have been counted worthy to attain that world and the resurrection from the dead . . . cannot die any more; for they are equal to the angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.'

And so, among the privileges of Mount Zion, there is *this* privilege, most practical, most helpful, most stimulating, of communion with the elder sons of God's family, who do God's commandments and hearken to the voice of His word, as they have been doing and hearkening from the beginning. As friends that serve us, as examples that teach us, as witnesses that confirm us, as fellow-students that inspire us while together

[1] G. H. Morrison, *The Wind on the Heath*, 118.

we gaze on the deep things of God—in all these ways and with all these ends we are come unto the angels.

The Judge of All.

Heb. xii. 23.—'Ye are come . . . to God the Judge of all.'

THE words might be rendered, 'Ye are come to the God of all as Judge'; for the point which the writer wishes to bring out is not so much the general idea of the Divine presence as that presence considered under a specific aspect, and referring to one mode of His action—viz., the judicial. It is further to be noticed that the judgment which is here spoken about is, as the very language—'Ye *are* come to the Judge'—implies, not future, but present. The Old Testament, with continual reference to which this letter is saturated, has a great deal more to say about the present continuous judgment which God works all through the ages than about the final future judgment. And, in accordance, not only with the language of our text, which makes *coming* a present thing, but also with the whole tone of the Old Testament, we should recognize here a reference, not so much to the final tribunal before which all mankind must stand (at which the Judge is characteristically represented in the New Testament as being, not God the Father, but Jesus Christ), as to the continual judgment, both in the sense of decision as to character and infliction of consequences, which is being exercised *now* by the God of all.

1. So, then, the first thought suggested by this idea is: Here is a truth which it is the office of faith to realize continually in our daily lives. Our loving access to God has brought us right under the eye of the Judge, and, though there be no terror in our approach to that tribunal, there ought to be a wholesome awe, the awe which is the very opposite of the cowering dread which hath torment. He would be a bold criminal who would commit crimes in the very judgment hall and before the face of his judge. And that must be a very defective Christian faith which, like the so-called faith of many among us, goes through life and sins in entire oblivion of the fact that it stands in the very presence of the Judge of all the earth. If we could rend the veil as death will rend it, and see the things which are as faith will help us to see them—for it *thins*, if it does not tear, the envious curtain between—would it be possible that we should live the low, mean, selfish, earthly, sinful lives, devoured by anxieties, defaced by stains, depressed by trivial sorrows, which, alas! so many of us do live? 'Ye are come . . . to God the Judge of all.' 'If ye call him Father who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.'

2. Then, again, notice that this judgment of God is one which a Christian man should joyfully accept. 'The Lord will judge his people,' says one of the psalms. 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities,' says one of the prophets. Such sayings represent this present judgment as inevitable, just because of the close connection into which true faith brings a man with his Father in heaven. Inevitable, and likewise most blessed and desirable, for in the thought are included all the methods by which, in providence, and by ministration of His truth and of His Spirit, God reveals to us our hidden meannesses, and delivers us sometimes, even by the consequences which accrue from them, from the burden and power of our sin.

3. So, then, the office of faith in regard to this continuous judgment which God is exercising upon us because He loves us is, first of all, to open our hearts to it by confession, by frank communion, and by referring all our actions to Him to court that investigation. That judgment is no mere knowledge by cold Omniscience, such as a heathen conception of the Divine eye might make it to be; but just as a careful gardener will go over his rose-trees, and the more carefully the more precious they are in his sight, to pick from each nestling-place at the junction of the leaves the tiny insects that are sucking out their sap, and destroying them, so God will search our hearts in order to pluck from these the crawling evils which, microscopic and tiny as they may be, will yet, in their multitude innumerable, be destructive of the life of our spirit. It is a *gospel* when we say, 'The Lord will judge his people.' Therefore in many a psalm we have the writers spreading themselves out before God.

and beseeching Him to come and search them, and try them, and sift them through His sieve, and know them altogether, in the sure confidence that wheresoever He beholds an evil He will be ready to cure it, and that whosoever spreadeth out his sin before God will be lightened of the burden of his sin.

¶ To those who confess frankly, honestly, promptly, God is all propitiable and forgiving. 'I have sinned,' says David; 'the Lord hath taken away thy sin,' is the instant response. In the same moment that we resolve upon confession, He runs forth to meet us, and to silence our lips with the kiss of peace. [1]

(1) This merciful judgment, which is, in fact, all directed to the perfecting and sanctifying of its subjects, reaches its end in the measure in which we register its decisions in our consciences. God writes His mind about us on them, and when they speak they are only echoing the sentence that has been pronounced from that loftier tribunal. Therefore, whosoever professes himself to be a Christian and does anything, be it great or small, which his conscience rebukes when done, and prohibited before it was done, that man is despising the judgment of God, and bringing down upon himself the condemnation which follows despised judgment. 'If we should judge ourselves we should not be judged.' Reverence your consciences: they are the echo of the Judge's voice; peruse their records: they are the register of the Judge's sentence; and whensoever that inward voice speaks, bow before it and say, 'Lord! Thy servant heareth.'

¶ The conscience in each man is the Christ in each man. It is the ray of light coming straight from the great Fountain of Light; or rather, it is the eye guided by the Sun; or it is the child's shell murmuring of its native ocean; or the cord let down by God into each man by which He leads each. Often the string lies quite slack; the man is not conscious of the guidance and the guide. Then the string becomes tight, and the man feels the drawing; he is conscious of God. The great thing is to identify duty and conscience hourly with God. [2]

(2) And then, further, remember that this judgment is one that demands our thankful acceptance of the discipline which it puts in force. If we knew ourselves we should bless God for our sorrows. These are His special means of drawing His children away from their evil. 'When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.' There would be less impatience, less blank amazement when suffering comes to us, less vain and impotent regret for vanished blessings, if we saw in all the dealings of our Father's hand the results of His judgment, and believed that it is better for us to be separated, though it be with violence and much bleeding of torn-away hearts, from our idols than that our idolatry should destroy us and mar them. 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.'

There is no grievous chastening but combineth
Some brightness with the gloom;
Round every thorn in the flesh there twineth
Some wreath of softening bloom.

The sorrows that to us seem so perplexing,
Are mercies kindly sent,
To guard our wayward souls from sadder vexing,
And greater ills prevent.

Like angels stern, they meet us when we wander
Out of the narrow track,
With sword in hand, and yet with voices tender,
To warn us quickly back.

We fain would eat the fruit that is forbidden,
Not heeding what God saith:
But by these flaming cherubim we're chidden
Lest we should pluck our death.

To save us from the pit no screen of roses
Would serve for our defence;
The hindrance that completely interposes,
Stings back with violence.

At first when smarting from the shock, complaining
Of wounds that freely bleed,
God's hedges of severity us paining,
May seem severe indeed.

No tender veil of heavenly verdure brightens
The branches fierce and bare;
No sun of comfort the dark sky enlightens,
Or warms the wintry air.

[1] George Tyrrell.
[2] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, ii 353.

But *afterwards* God's blessed spring-time cometh,
And bitter murmurs cease;
The sharp severity that pierced us bloometh,
And yields the fruits of peace.

The wreath of life its healing leaves discovers,
Twined round each wounding stem,
And, climbing by the thorns, above them hovers
Its flowery diadem.

The last day only, all God's plan revealing,
Shall teach us what we owe
To these *preventing mercies,* thus concealing
Themselves in masks of woe;

Shall tell what wrongs they kept us from committing,
What lust and pride they crossed,
What depths of sin they fenced, in which unwitting
Our souls would have been lost. [1]

(3) This judgment is not only the merciful separation of us from our sins, it is also a judgment on our behalf. The office of the early Jewish judges was not only the judicial one which we mean by the word, but was much wider, and some trace of that idea runs through almost all the Old Testament references to the Divine judgment. It comes to mean, not merely a decision, adverse or favourable as the case may be, as to the moral character of its subjects, but it also substantially means pleading their cause, defending their right, intervening for them. And so in many a psalm you will find such petitions as this: 'Judge me, O Lord; for I am poor and needy. Plead my cause against them which rise up against me.' And the same conception of the Judge's office appears in one of our Lord's parables familiar to us all, in which we are told that the Lord 'will avenge his own elect . . . though he bear long with them.'

(4) Thus, another thought that comes out of this conception of our approach to 'the Judge of all' is that we may confidently commit our cause to Him, and leave our vindication in His hands. So, abstaining from self-assertion, from self-vindication, from vengeance or recompense, patience, courage, consolation, strength, all these virtues will be ours if we understand to whom we come by our faith, and can behold, on the throne of the universe, One who will plead our cause and undertake for us whensoever we are burdened or oppressed.

¶ It is a singular piece of wisdom to apprehend truly, and without passion, the works of God, and so well to distinguish His justice from His mercy as not to miscall those noble attributes; yet it is likewise an honest piece of logic so to dispute and argue the proceedings of God as to distinguish even His judgments into mercies. For God is merciful unto all, because better to the worst than the best deserve; and to say He punisheth none in this world, though it be a paradox, is no absurdity. [1]

[1] H. Macmillan, *The Christmas Rose*, 4.

The Spirits of Just Men.

Heb. xii. 23.—'Ye are come . . . to the spirits of just men.'

THE writer here teaches the new converts that their association with the Church of Christ, so far from impoverishing them, brings them into vital personal relation with all that is best in the past. He brings them into the presence of the famous and mighty dead. When you come, he says, to the city of the Living God, you are in the presence of the spirits of just men made perfect. The phrase is so simple, so vivid, so catholic, and so true. They are not sleeping partners in the business; they are active, their influence is a living one, their power broadens with the years. To be insensitive to them is only to be half a Christian. You and they together are a glorious unity. For Christianity has swept death away in its new conception of eternal life. The dead, it says, are not dead, but alive unto God and unto you; you are in one system with them. They have not fought and failed. They are with you and you with them, until the consummation of all things.

1. There is not one of us but owes far more to those in the grave than he owes to those alive. Our debt to the living is great; our debt to the dead is far greater. Our civilization, our knowledge, our morality, our religion, our manners, our very bodies—nine-tenths of these, nay, far more than that, is a heritage from the past. Strike out from all that makes you what you are every thing you owe to the buried generations of your

[1] Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, 403.

fellow-men, and what remains would be something lower than the lowest savage. The greatest of living philosophers has declared that our life is just the *past* flowing on into the future. And what a past it is, if we only knew! Were a vision to be granted of the uncounted generations whose life is flowing on through you and me at this moment; were a general assembly to be called of our forgotten benefactors, our forgotten teachers, our forgotten helpers; were all those to whom we are debtors for our deepest thoughts and brightest hopes to appear before us here and now; were we to be suddenly confronted with that vast company, rank behind rank, who in every age down to the remotest have been teaching our hands to labour and our minds to think and our hearts to love, and through whom we have become what we are, then the visible spaces of the earth would be too small to contain that multitude.

I come from nothing; but from where
Come the undying thoughts I bear?
  Down, through long links of death and birth,
  From the past poets of the earth.
My immortality is there.

I am like the blossom of an hour.
But long, long vanished sun and shower
  Awoke my breath i' the young world's air.
  I track the past back everywhere
Through seed and flower and seed and flower.

Or I am like a stream that flows
Full of the cold springs that arose
  In morning lands, in distant hills;
  And down the plain my channel fills
With melting of forgotten snows.

Voices, I have not heard, possessed
My own fresh songs; my thoughts are blessed
  With relics of the far unknown.
  And mixed with memories not my own
The sweet streams throng into my breast.

Before this life began to be,
The happy songs that wake in me
  Woke long ago and far apart.
  Heavily on this little heart
Presses this immortality. [1]

[1] Alice Meynell, *Poems*, 62.

¶ I could not help being interested in a story told me, almost too simple to repeat, of the land from which I have just come. An inspector went to visit a little village school in the mid-west of America, where there was a simple country teacher. In a rather superior way the inspector said, 'You don't seem to have much of a staff here; who are your teachers?' The little village schoolmaster drew himself up and said, 'Sir, Shakespeare is on my staff; Milton and Scott and Luther and Carlyle are all on my staff, teachers of my school.' That man knew the truth. Every true school has an illustrious staff. [1]

2. The next great truth that must strike us as we read this passage is the splendid simplicity and catholicity of this saying, 'the spirits of just men.' Could anything be more nobly comprehensive, more free from the narrowness and pettiness of ecclesiasticism? It is connected with the previous phrase, 'unto God the Judge of all.' All who have been adjudged just by the living God have their place within this glorious society. The breadth and the scope of it are as infinite as the love of God. It makes all sacerdotal and ecclesiastical tests seem mean and presumptuous. No man can appoint us our place, no man can deny us our place, within the holy Catholic Church. Who are within the firmament of the Church? The spirits of the just, the representatives of that justice which lives by faith in the Eternal, who is their Judge. There is not even an attempt to apply a credal test. The word 'orthodoxy' is never mentioned. It is not even required of these people that they should solemnly affirm their belief that the people who disagree with them cannot be saved. The writer of this Epistle holds up a broad evangel—those who fear God and do righteousness are accepted.

3. 'The spirits of just men.' Did you ever reflect that those who govern us from their high places in the heavens are the spirits of men of justice. Those who are remembered and immortalized, and whose authority is acknowledged, live by virtue of one quality and one alone—the quality which is to be supreme in the Church and the supreme contribution of the Church to the world—

[1] C. S. Horne, in *The British Congregationalist*, Oct. 12, 1911, p. 244.

they are men of justice. The Church of God needs to look at its heaven. In the days to come it will not suffice that a church should be a charitable institution, a centre from whence doles are distributed, either to the deserving or to the undeserving poor. The Church must remember that it is associated with men of justice, and the Church must be true to its traditions. The Church has a thousand virtues open to it, but it will fail if it possesses all these and lacks this essential quality of justice. It may be brave, but so often is an aggressive and iniquitous soldiery. It may be merciful, but so often are many people who weep over the woes they ought to have prevented. It may be honest, but so are thousands of people who don't cheat, because they don't dare to. The Church which is not interested in doing justice and getting justice done dishonours its dead, the mighty dead who witness against us out of the unseen.

How are we to aspire and to achieve that spirit of justice? The only answer to that is the one which St. Paul gave, and to which once again the Church should solemnly educate itself. Justice, said St. Paul, can live only by faith. That is perhaps the greatest saying in the world—justice can live only by faith. There can be no social justice without spiritual reality. The life of man, apart from the life of God, will never realize itself in justice, and no man, however honest and however true, can really and endurably succeed until he has some realization of the fact that the cure of all our ills is that the will of God should be done on earth as it is in heaven. When our fathers spoke of justification by faith they meant that a heart that was right, and a life that was right, and a will that was right, had first of all to find its God in faith. How precious is that message of the New Testament.

The Living Dead.

Heb. xii. 23.—'Ye are come . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect.'

WHOEVER would speak of the life to come must speak very diffidently and very reverently. Anything that savours of dogmatism is wholly out of place. Scripture gives very little definite information about the nature of the life beyond. There are many questions that are tremendously interesting to us about which it says nothing at all. It assures us of the fact of a life to come, but about the nature of it, it bids us trust Christ. So that all one can do in speaking of the life beyond is to guess, and suggest, and infer certain things from scattered hints.

1. One truth is as sure and clear as revelation can make it: those whom we call dead are not dead at all but *alive*. That is the real gospel of Easter Day. Christ is the first-fruits of them that slept. What happened to Him happens to us all. Death is not a *state;* it is an *act*. It is not a condition, it is a transition. It is not an abode in which we dwell, it is a gate through which we pass. When Christ with a loud voice gave up the ghost, He did not cease to be. He simply took down what St. Paul calls 'the earthly house of this tent.' He Himself entered that moment upon a larger and richer life. We must not make the mistake of thinking that He was non-existent during those two days He lay in the tomb. The third day does not mark the resumption of life on the part of Christ, but His visible reappearance to His disciples. He was alive all the time, blessedly, vividly alive, and engaged in some holy form of ministry, though the Evangelists do not tell us what it was.

The people whom we speak of as dead are more alive than the people we speak of as living. Their life is richer, larger, fuller. The conditions under which we live down here impose limitations upon us. There is no need to speak a single disparaging word of the body. Still, the fact that life here is *corporeal* places unescapable restrictions upon it. When the earthly body is laid aside, life assumes a new freedom. It is outside those fettering limitations of time and space. Life remains individual and personal. '*Thou* shalt be with me in Paradise.' But it possesses an amplitude and a fullness and a freedom not known before. As Dr. Maclaren puts it in a glowing passage: 'Every man that has died is at this instant in the full possession of all his faculties, in the intensest exercise of all his capacities, standing somewhere in God's presence, and feeling in every fibre of his being that life which comes after death is not less real, but more real; not less great, but more great; not less intense or full, but more intense and full than the mingled

life which, lived here on earth, was a centre of life surrounded with a crust and circumference of mortality.' Just as Jesus lives Himself, but with powers unrealized before, so our dead are all alive.

> And, doubtless, unto thee is given
> A life that bears immortal fruit
> In those great offices that suit
> The full-grown energies of heaven. [1]

2. The second truth is this: the dead, who are not dead at all but alive, are *in fellowship with us*. That is the truth specially suggested by this sentence, 'Ye are come . . . unto the spirits of just men made perfect.' It may refer primarily to worship, to the fact that, when we come together for purposes of worship, there are others present than those we see—dear and saintly people who in the old days loved the habitation of God's house and who, though now in glory, love it still. But if such a thing as a real communion with the spirits of just men made perfect is possible in worship, the principle is established that spirit with spirit can meet; the dead who are so gloriously alive can hold fellowship with the living who have not yet died. The 'communion of saints' is not to be limited to those who still dwell in this temporal and material world; it extends to those who have passed to the other side of death. We are in touch with those who have gone before us; we come 'to the spirits of just men made perfect.'

¶ I think we have grievously blundered in severing heaven from earth as we have done in our thoughts. We think of the heavenly and the earthly spheres as being totally cut off from one another, and having no communication with one another. Even our hymns have emphasized this idea of separation. And the human heart has taken its revenge for our divorce of the heavenly and earthly spheres, and our practical denial of fellowship, by betaking itself to spiritualism. I confess quite frankly that I do not like spiritualism; I find it difficult to believe that such mechanical means as table-rapping can become vehicles of spiritual intercourse; I feel that the cultivation of the occult is attended by all sorts of perils and mischiefs. But the entire vogue of spiritualism is due to this craving for fellowship with those who have gone before, the desire to prove that heaven and earth are in communication with one another. The only way in which we can combat spiritualism is ourselves to rescue this truth about fellowship from the neglect into which it has fallen—to speak and think in a more Christian way about those who have passed on. For the truth is, of course, that heaven and earth are not closed to one another. They are open to one another in all sorts of wondrous ways. There is communion between them; the denizens of the one world are in touch with the other. 'Ye are come . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect.' [1]

> Not far away our Blessed are,
> Though hidden from our famished eyes;
> It is not in some utmost star,
> Their happy Paradise.
> They rest with Jesus where He is,
> And 'all the days' He is with us;
> The Holy Place, the Bower of Bliss
> Is near, is present thus.
> There in their perfect life unseen
> No gulfs of space from us divide;
> 'Tis but the Lord Who walks between
> And they His other side. [2]

¶ I was once in the company of that great and good man, Dr. Duncan of Edinburgh. He was speaking with a much-tried brother minister, over whom wave after wave of successive bereavement had rolled, ere the midtime of his life. Said this minister, recalling his experience, 'How utter the separation that death makes—one moment here, another out in the mystery.' His feeling, you see, was the feeling of the poet:

> I wage not any feud with death
> For changes wrought in form and face;
> No lower life that earth's embrace
> May breed in him, can fright my faith.
>
> For this alone on Death I wreak
> The wrath that garners in my heart;
> He put our lives so far apart
> We cannot hear each other speak.

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, xl.

[1] J. D. Jones, *If a Man Die*, 87.

[2] H. C. G. Moule.

I remember the answer as the speaker relapsed into the old Scotch tones of his early days: 'Division—na, na. Upstairs and doonstairs are no so far apart!' [1]

3. It is a comfort to know that heaven and earth are open to one another, and that those who have passed into the eternal world are still in communion with us. But is the communion mutual? They help us; can we in any way help them? They pray for us; can we pray for them? One of the things Protestantism abjured and cast out was the Roman practice of 'prayers for the dead.' And it was no wonder that the practice was banned, for it had become the occasion of the grossest abuses. In practice it meant this, that anybody's soul could be prayed out of Purgatory if money enough was forthcoming; and this again had the most disastrous results on the moral life. But there is an old Latin proverb which says that the abuse of a thing does not take away the rightful use of it. And the fact that the early Protestants denounced the practice for the evils that had gathered round it does not necessarily imply that there was no truth in it. A question like this is not to be settled by bandying about the names 'Catholic' and 'Protestant.' The answer depends on the view we take of what happens at death. If you take the view that at death a man's fate is finally and irrevocably fixed, then prayer for him becomes a sort of blasphemy. But if you believe that even beyond death God pursues His redeeming work, prayer will seem natural and fitting. There are Scriptures that seem to lend countenance to both views. There is no sure and definite word of prophecy. But there are thousands of people nowadays who are praying for those who have died. It is of no use telling them they ought not to do it. They cannot help doing it. You cannot suppress an instinct of the soul. They believe their dear ones are in the hands of God, and that their prayers can reach them. If they are wrong—there is love in the very wrong, and God will understand. But if death does not settle everything, if God there as here is intent upon His redeeming purpose, then the believing and passionate prayers offered here on earth may further the work of redemption within the veil.

¶ What your mother said about praying 'for the damned' struck me very much. I do not think it is any use telling people not to pray for the dead; you might as well teach them not to think of them or love them, or indeed tell them roundly that after death there is nothing at all. I think most people who pray at all do pray for the dead; and as for the 'damned,' does that really settle everything before the last day? I could not promise myself another chance after dying if I refused to trust God now, and therefore I cannot preach such a hope to anybody else; but that is not the same as giving up hope of everybody that dies in his 'sins.' What do you think? Certainly the absence of any example of it from the Bible is remarkable, especially taken with the life and death urgency of all the Bible does say; but a great many things must be lawful that the Bible says nothing about—things covered by the word of Jesus, 'If it were not so, I would have told you'—a saying which always seems to me to justify yielding, as your mother did, to any instinct of the nature which is made in God's image, and cannot be simply delusive in the things of God. [1]

[1] W. A. Gray, in *The Expositary Times*, xiv. 226.

The Mediator of the New Covenant.

Heb. xii. 24.—'Ye are come . . . to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.

WHAT is the notion that underlies the old-fashioned, and to some of us obsolete and unwelcome, word 'covenant'? Why! simply this—a definite disclosure of God's purpose as affecting you and me, by which disclosure He is prepared to stand and to be bound. A covenant is a revelation, but a revelation that obliges the Revealer to a certain course of conduct; or, if you would rather have a less theological word, it is a system of promise under which God mercifully has willed that we should live. And just as, when a king gives forth a proclamation, he is bound by the fact that he gave it forth, so God, out of all the infinite possibilities of His action, condescends to tell us what His line is to be. He lets us see the works of the clock, not wholly, but in so far as we are affected by His action.

Now there is an Old Covenant and a New Covenant

[1] *Letters of Principal James Denney*, Edited by J. Moffatt, 18.

1. The Old Covenant was that which was expressly made by Jehovah between Himself and Abraham and his seed. It was a union between God and one family chosen out of the rest of mankind. For a long time this covenant had no written records, or at least none that have survived in a separate and independent form. But, after a while, various books of the Hebrew nation grew together into a sacred and authorized collection, which was understood to be illustrative of the national covenant. In the first of these, the Book of Genesis, we read of the institution of the covenant; how God called out Abram, gave him the new name of Abraham, and promised to be the God of his seed after him. 'I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.' One of God's promises to Abraham was that he would give the land of Canaan to his seed; another, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. The substance of the covenant was contained in the words, 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people'; and as a seal of this covenant, God appropriated the sign of circumcision.

All the history of Abraham and of his posterity is a series of illustrations of God's faithfulness to the covenant which He had made. He caused a son to be born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age, expressly as a child of promise and as a reward of faith. He made the seed of Abraham to multiply till they became a great nation. In the course of time He put them in possession of the land which He had promised to Abraham. At the same time, He gave them laws and a constitution, that they might be an organized people, having Jehovah for their God. A priesthood and a system of worship was established, in order that the people might have spiritual approach to Him. Kings were given, to reign in Jehovah's name; prophets rose up, to give special utterance to His will and to declare His purposes. When the people confessed Jehovah as God and consented to be His people, they found glory and blessedness, they prospered in strength and unity. When they broke the covenant, and followed other gods, they became disunited, weak, and corrupt, and were given over to conquerors to be chastised. The covenant was the abiding basis of all God's dealings with the chosen people; it furnished also a permanent law and principle for the public and private life of the people themselves.

The promise of the Abrahamic covenant found its highest fulfilment when God gave His Son to be born of the seed of Abraham and David, and to be the blessing of all the nations of the earth. It found this fulfilment; and then, as a special covenant, it expired. The coming of Jesus Christ was the signal for the passing away of all that was exclusive in the Divine dealings with men. Hints had been given through the prophets of a new covenant, which should be more glorious than the old. As the Old Covenant began visibly to pass away—in the extinction of those institutions which had been its appointed signs; in the destruction of the Temple, Jehovah's house; in the trampling under foot of Jerusalem, the holy city; and in the cessation of the sacrifices through which the sacred people had access to their God—the glory of the New Covenant began to shine out more distinctly to the eyes of the believers in Christ. Then it was seen and declared that the New Covenant was founded upon better promises, that its bond was stamped by a holier seal, that its blessings had a wider scope, that the fellowship with God which it bestowed was nobler, more intimate, and more spiritual.

2. The New Covenant was not expressed in words, but in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He was *the living Word* of the Father, in whom the Father's mind was known and heard, in whom the Father's new and better promises were plainly written out. We have in the Lord Jesus Christ an eternal pledge and bond and means of union with the invisible God. In sending His only-begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, to be born, to live, and to die as a man, and then to be raised again and exalted by the glory of the Father, God not only said more expressively than any words could say it, 'Ye who share the flesh and blood which my Son has worn shall be my sons and daughters,' but He showed us in *what kind* of sonship we were to be united with Him, what fatherly love would flow down from Him upon us, with what filial feelings we might look up to Him, what a holy spirit would bind the heart of God to man, and the hearts of men to God. Jesus, the Son of God, is the living Mediator of the New Covenant, in whom God has declared Himself to us, in whom we have access to God.

(1) Where shall a poor man rest his soul outside of the direct or indirect influences of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ? The very men who reject Him to-day, on the plea that they have learnt a nobler conception of God than they can find in Christianity, owe their conception of Him to the gospel which they reject. Where else is there certitude solid enough to resist the pressure of sorrow and of sin; confidence enough to maintain faith in the face of difficulty and conscious evil and death; or energy enough in a creed to make religion an all-controlling influence and an all-gladdening stay, except in Jesus Christ? Nowhere beyond the limits to which either the river of the water of life has manifestly flowed, or where some rills and rivulets from it have crept underground to give strange verdure to some far-off pasture—nowhere else is there found the confidence in the Father's heart which is the property of the Christian man, and the result of the Christian Covenant. Jesus Christ brings God to man by the declaration of His nature incarnate in humanity.

(2) And, on the other hand, He brings man to God; for He stands to each of us as our true Brother, united to us by such close and real bonds that all that He has been and done may be ours if we join ourselves to Him by faith. And He brings men to God, because in Him alone do we find the drawings that incline wayward and wandering hearts to the Father. And He seals for us that great covenant in His own person and work, in so far as what He in Manhood has done has made it possible that such promises should be given to us. And, still further, He is the Mediator of the covenant, in so far as He Himself possesses in His humanity all the blessings which Manhood is capable of deriving from the Father, and He has them all in order that He may give them all. There is the great Reservoir from which all men may fill their tiny cups.

Men tell us that they want no Mediator between them and God. Go down into your own hearts; try to understand what sin is; and then go up as near as you can to the dazzling white light, and try partially to conceive of what God's holiness is—do you think you, as you are, could walk in that light and not be consumed? Surely no man who has any deep knowledge of his own heart, and any, though it be inadequate, yet true, conception of the Divine nature, would dare take upon his lips that boast which we often hear—'We need none to come between us and God.' Rather would he thankfully hear Christ say, 'No man cometh to the Father but by me,' and pray for grace to tread in that only way that leadeth unto God.

¶ Natural Religion, says Newman, is based upon the sense of sin; it recognizes the disease, but it cannot find, it does not look out for, the remedy. That remedy, both for guilt and for moral impotence, is found in the central doctrine of Revelation, the Mediation of Christ. Thus it is that Christianity has been able from the first to occupy the world and gain a hold on every class of human society to which its preachers reached; this is why the Roman power and the multitude of religions which it embraced could not stand against it; this is the secret of its sustained energy, and its never-flagging martyrdoms; this is how at present it is so mysteriously potent, in spite of the new and fearful adversaries which beset its path. It has with it that gift of staunching and healing the one deep wound of human nature, which avails more for its success than a full encyclopedia of scientific knowledge and a whole library of controversy, and therefore it must last while human nature lasts.[1]

Plead Thou my cause, else who will plead for me,
My Kingly Advocate before the Throne?
Trembling I stand; guilty, ashamed, alone,
Girt only by my own iniquity,
Cried down by sins that fain would silence Thee,
Some coming after, some to judgment gone.
What I have done, what I have left undone,
Beckon me out to deathless misery.

The Court is set, and will not let me go;
The heavy books are black with blotted shame.
I cannot answer; none can plead but Thou.
I knew not what I did in sinning so;
Hell hungers for me; see, the worm, the flame!
Nought but Love's eloquence can save me now.[1]

[1] *The Grammar of Assent*, 480.
[1] R. H. Benson, *Poems*, 38.

The Blood of Sprinkling.

Heb. xii. 24.—'Ye are come . . . to the blood of sprinkling.'

THE writer has been taking his readers on a journey. From Sinai to Zion—that was the journey they had taken, from what is outward and spectacular to what is real, from what is transient to the more majestic things which abide. The Apostle heaps together details of the contrast between the old order and the new, but, like a skilful orator, he reserves the most significant to the last. 'Ye are come . . . to the blood of sprinkling.' When a covenant or bargain in old times was concluded between God and man, the blood of a victim was sprinkled, first upon the altar, which stood for God, and then upon the people, so that the two interests were visibly associated. This was done by Moses in the wilderness, and if a new covenant were now to be established the parties must again be linked together according to the ancient rule; so the Apostle conceives of the blood as carried within the veil, where God is, and as sprinkled also on the men of the new order who, in heart and feeling, must all of them bear some reminder of Christ's sacrifice. To that you have *come,* he says, that is the distance you have travelled. It may seem too generous an assumption to make that you and I are actually marked with the tokens of Christ's Passion; but we must not grumble if we are taken at the level, not of what we are, but of what we ought to be.

1. At least we all have come to a recognition of the *mystery of the blood.* There is nothing strange in a man's dying or even in his dying by unrighteous violence, for the world's history is full of such events; but the martyrs are our fellows, whilst Jesus, in great measure, stands apart, His sacrifice a lonely and terrible thing which demands some deeper explanation. In the Book of Samuel, where he is telling of the young Asahel, with his boyish daring and his tragic death, the narrator adds one graphic note: 'It came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.' That single line suggests a picture of primitive emotion—the fighting man, his comrades and admirers, straggling up in the heat of pursuit, and halting by his body, with all their ardour suddenly damped. They gather about the place in a slowly widening ring, looking at the dead boy and wondering who has had the heart for such a deed. It is very primitive and very human; and here also, in the presence of the sacrifice of Christ, men have halted, guessing at reasons and gazing dumbly in perplexity. Apostles, theologians, saints and lovers of their kind—masters both in speculation and in action—have gathered at the spot. If they speak it is always with a margin, for they are conscious of how much there is which still outgoes them. St. Paul speaks of the gift of Christ as 'unspeakable,' of the riches of Christ as 'unsearchable' of His love as 'passing knowledge'; for though much is clear, yet much transcends our human powers.

2. But it is not all mystery: there are points on which its voice is clear. St. John speaks (1 Jn. v. 8) of the Blood as bearing witness, and to the receiving of this witness men need to attain.

(1) The world we live in is ambiguous and perplexing in its look, and yet the Blood of Christ sounds out the witness in regard to it, that God loves the world, and that human life, with all its blundering, is sacred to Him, and that, at His own cost, He seeks to recall His creatures to Himself. To anyone who is content to live meanly such an account of things may appear incredible. He may profess to accept it, but such professions count for little, for it would require a universe vaster and profounder than his to give room for the Cross. A creature who can dedicate his days and years to trivial engagements is not able sincerely to admit the idea that God gave His Son to die for the world. And since we all live largely on the surface of things, this touches every one of us: if we are to come to the witness which the Blood bears as to the world we have infinitely much to learn and to unlearn. So long as in thoughtlessness or in scorn we look on a mass of our fellows as a rabble of mean men without sacredness or dignity, so long as we can hear with neither pity nor indignation of the conditions in which they are living, we make it evident that we have not received Christ's witness yet, and we need to learn of Him the true worth of the world and of human life.

(2) The Blood of Christ has a witness also about God, which, if it were heartily received, would deliver us from any 'spirit of bondage' and make us, in the fullest sense, to be Christ's free men. A host of people, even in doing what is right, do it slavishly because it is the custom, and not from any inward prompting; and though duty is a useful leader over rough country, urging us on when, for sheer weariness, we are ready to give up, yet duty alone, without love and pleasure and sunshine, will never fulfil the tasks of life. Cicero says that 'freedom is the power of living as one wishes, and the only man who lives thus is he who does what is right and finds some pleasure in doing it.' If that is a just account of freedom, there are not many free men among us, and our enslavement largely proceeds from our ignorance of the God to whom our service is due. The Blood of Christ assures us that God does not sit apart as Spectator and Arbiter of human existence, watching our struggles, and noting our slips and falls. Into the long strife of men there entered One who was 'God manifest in the flesh,' who laid upon His heart the burden of our human undertaking. Nothing that touched or hampered men was without interest for Jesus, even their hunger and their pains were His concern; and at the last, He was seen 'bearing our sins in his own body on the tree.' Eternal life, which means the life which satisfies, is bestowed by our Father as a gift; where that is realized the whole temper of man's service is transformed. A multitude of Christian people might quite honestly protest that, in some theological sense, they believe in Jesus Christ; but it is certain that they do not believe in God. At least they do not trust in Him and His goodwill; and until they come to the witness which the Blood of Christ bears about God, they will never be sure of Him, or serve Him lovingly and rejoicingly as He means them to do.

¶ The Christlikeness of the character of God is not a truth we have yet deeply and widely grasped. We have found it easier to think of the Son as Divine than of the Father as human. The Master might still say to His disciples, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet you have not seen the Father in Me?' . . . A poor dying woman once said to me, 'Now that I know God is as good as Jesus Christ I can die in peace.' In her own way she had seized the very essence of the Gospel of the Incarnation. . . . In the feeling, disposition, and attitude of Jesus to the weak, the sorrowful, and the sinful, we see revealed the feeling, disposition, and attitude of God. What Jesus was to the little children of Palestine, God is to all lowly things. What Jesus was to the bereaved sisters of Bethany, God is to every saddened heart and household. What Jesus was to the traders in the courts of the Temple, God is to all who try to serve Him and mammon. What Jesus was to the heart-broken woman who was a sinner, God is to every sincere penitent. What Jesus was to His murderers in His prayers of unfathomable pity upon the Cross, God is toward all who scorn and reject His love.[1]

(3) The Blood speaks out clearly also as to sin and the apparent mastery which it exercises in the world. Men say that 'to err is human,' as if the impulsive and the short-sighted parts of nature alone were dominant; but the Blood reminds us that to resist and to overcome are also human. It is an enduring memorial of victory, and through the ages it has gathered about itself incidents and episodes of triumph, for Christ makes men conquerors and more. Those who, through fear of death, had been all their lifetime subject to bondage have been helped to see that there are uglier things by far than death, and thus they have grown ashamed of their mean compliances. St. Paul asserts in one place (Rom. viii. 3) that 'Christ condemned sin in the flesh,' branding it as a mere intruder. There is a sense in which every gallant human performance sets a standard for all who come after.

> No life can die that ever wrought for truth,
> Thereby a *law of nature it became*,—

a new principle and rule of conduct; and thus, apart from all that is mysterious, in the open field of moral life, the blood of Jesus Christ remains a summons and a challenge to men to bear themselves worthily.

¶ I am far from daring to suppose that I can understand all that may be involved in the death of Christ; but I have always felt that there is nothing over-daring in endeavouring to see from the human side how this great event has operated upon human nature, and I have seemed to myself thus to see something of the meaning of salvation

[1] L. S. Hunter, *John Hunter, D.D.*, 160.

and redemption. The life and character of Christ are beyond expression attractive of our love and admiration, and those whom we love we desire to imitate. May it not perhaps be truly said that the desire to imitate is in proportion to the love and admiration? This tendency to imitation is the great means by which alike good and evil are infectious—by which they are communicated from one to another. Thus, in point of fact, and that visibly in the history of the world, the example of Christ has wrought a change in thousands of human beings—they have desired to become Christ-like, and by desiring they have so become. To be made Christ-like is to be made holy—and this is sanctification; to be made Christ-like is to be made just in the highest and widest sense of that term—and this is justification. To be made holy and just is to be set free from the power of sin—and this is salvation. These things seem to me to be not great transactions in heaven, or great mysteries requiring tomes of theology to explain them, but real simple facts in human life, produced according to the principles and emotions of our human nature. There is no need—nay, there is no room—to draw a line between the work of Christ as a Saviour and His work as an Example: He works as a Saviour because His example in life, and still more in death, works on our hearts and feelings, and makes us abhor those things which are evil and cling to those things which are befitting to Him.[1]

But any reading of His experience which excludes mystery must be both shallow and partial. The Apostles acknowledged in Christ's dying for sin something which needed not to be repeated, and which could not be enriched. Borrowing a word from Daniel, they would rejoicingly have said that He 'finished transgression, and made an end of sins, and brought in everlasting righteousness.' In regard to sin the Blood of Christ proclaims that it is vanquished. 'There is no condemnation,' says St. Paul, 'to them which are in Christ Jesus.' 'In His death our sins are dead.' In pardoning men God deals with them not as they are, but as they are going to be; He deals with them as joined to the Lord Jesus in purpose and desire. And those who thus are 'in Christ Jesus' come out from the abiding shadow of defeat; for Christ's sake, God 'does not remember their sin.'

[1] A. Fry, *Sir Edward Fry*, 161.

3. But Christ in His dying asks something of men. He says—

> All this I did for thee,
> What wilt thou do for Me?

and in our response to this appeal we show convincingly whether we have or have not come to the Blood of sprinkling. In presence of that sacrifice Christian living ought to be a heroic thing, but commonly it is both trivial and cheap. Our standards are taken from the society about us, where to forgive seven times appears a most unusual reach of magnanimity; but when we think of the Cross and all that it requires, even to forgive seventy times seven cannot seem undue. And that is merely one example of the difference which is made by any increase in our understanding of His demand.

But even this does not bring us to the limit of our duty; Christian ethic is not a closed science, an absolute rule. 'Ye were redeemed,' says St. Peter, from a heartless, long-established way of living, 'not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ'; and thus the more we enter into the meaning and glory of His sacrifice, the loftier will the standard of His requirements appear. The Christian rule of life is high and always growing higher, calling for more courage and for more inventive and unselfish kindness. No one who remembers the Lord can remain content with a religion consisting of occasional flushes of emotion or of vaguely good intentions; we must seek to go from strength to strength, always seeing life more worthily, learning more and loving more, and never satisfied.

Sir George Adam Smith travelled once from Paris to Marseilles with a young priest who was on his way to a difficult and lonely missionary post in India. He was well born and well educated. 'Why do you go?' he asked him. After a moment's surprise that such a question should be asked, the young man answered, 'He loved me and gave Himself for me.'

Immovable Things.

Heb. xii. 27.—'That those things which cannot be shaken may remain.'

THE passage from which these words are taken is one of the royal texts of the New Testament. It

declares one of those great laws of the Kingdom of God which may fulfil itself, once and again, at many eras, and by many methods; which fulfilled itself gloriously in the first century after Christ; which fulfilled itself again in the fifth century; and again at the time of the Crusades; and again at the great Reformation in the sixteenth century; and is fulfilling itself again at this very day.

Now is the Lord Christ shaking the heavens and the earth, that those things which are made may be removed, and that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. We all confess this fact in different phrases. We say that we live in an age of change, of transition, of scientific and social revolution. Our notions of the physical universe are rapidly altering with the new discoveries of science; and our notions of Ethics and Theology are altering as rapidly.

The era looks differently to different minds, just as the first century after Christ looked differently according as men looked with faith towards the future, or with regret towards the past. Some rejoice in the present era as one of progress. Others lament over it as one of decay. Some say that we are on the eve of a Reformation as great and splendid as that of the sixteenth century. Others say that we are rushing headlong into scepticism and atheism. Some say that a new era is dawning for humanity; others that the world and the Church are coming to an end, and that the last day is at hand. Both parties may be right, and both may be wrong. Men have always talked thus at great crises. They talked thus in the first century, in the fifth, in the eleventh, in the sixteenth. And then both parties were right, and yet both were wrong. And why not now? What they meant to say then, and what they mean to say now, is what he who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews said for them in far deeper, wider, more accurate words—that the Lord Christ was shaking the heavens and the earth, that those things which can be shaken may be removed, as things which are made—cosmogonies, systems, theories, fashions, prejudices, of man's invention; while those things which cannot be shaken may remain, because they are eternal, the creation not of man, but of God.

What are the things which cannot be shaken?

1. *The supremacy of spiritual forces cannot be shaken.* The obtrusive circumstances of the hour shriek against that creed. Spiritual forces seem to be overwhelmed. We are witnessing a perfect carnival of insensate materialism. And yet, in spite of all this appalling outrage upon the senses, we must steadily beware of becoming the victims of the apparent and the transient. Behind the unchartered riot there hides a power whose invisible energy is the real master of the field. The ocean can be lashed by the winds into indescribable fury, and the breakers may rise and fall in crashing weight and disaster, and yet behind and beneath all the wild phenomena there is a subtle, mystical force which is exerting its silent mastery even at the very height of the storm. We must discriminate between the phenomenal and the spiritual, between the event of the hour and the drift of the year, between the issue of a battle and the tendency of a campaign. All of which means that, while we look at the things which are seen, we are also to look at the things which are not seen.

In the bitter waves of woe,
  Beaten and tossed about
By the sullen winds that blow
  From the desolate shores of doubt,—

When the anchors that faith had cast
  Are dragging in the gale,
I am quietly holding fast
  To the things that cannot fail:

I know that right is right;
  That it is not good to lie;
That love is better than spite,
  And a neighbor than a spy;

I know that passion needs
  The leash of a sober mind;
I know that generous deeds
  Some sure reward will find;

That the rulers must obey;
  That the givers shall increase;
That Duty lights the way
  For the beautiful feet of Peace;—

In the darkest night of the year,
  When the stars have all gone out,
That courage is better than fear,
  That faith is truer than doubt;

And fierce though the fiends may fight,
  And long though the angels hide,

I know that Truth and Right
Have the universe on their side;

And that somewhere, beyond the stars,
Is a Love that is better than fate;
When the night unlocks her bars
I shall see Him, and I will wait.[1]

2. *The power of truth can never be shaken.* The force of disloyalty may have its hour of triumph, and treachery may march for a season to victory after victory; but all the while truth is secretly exercising her mastery, and in the long run the labour of falsehood will crumble into ruin. There is no permanent conquest for a lie. You can no more keep the truth interred than you could keep the Lord interred in Joseph's tomb. You cannot bury the truth, you cannot strangle her, you cannot even shake her! You may burn up the records of truth, but you cannot impair the truth itself! When the records are reduced to ashes truth will walk abroad as an indestructible angel and minister of the Lord! 'He shall give his angels charge over thee;' and truth is one of His angels, and she cannot be destroyed.

One of the most impressive sights in the Oriental world is a great temple, standing where there has been an earthquake. All about are the ruins of villages, and among these ruins are some fragments of the temple itself which have been shaken off. Above the ruins, however, still rise the great solemn arches and columns, unshaken and unharmed, not buttressed by added supports, not even cemented together, but erect in their inherent stability, and looking down for thousands of years on the disasters which have overwhelmed the things that can be removed. That is the way truth stands before the Christian. There may not be so much of it as men at first had built, but what there is left was built to stay. What impresses the beholder is not so much the quantity of truth as its quality. It stands there, a monument to permanence in a world of change, and the very shaking of those things which can be removed gives new dignity to those things which cannot be shaken.

3. *The sovereignty of the Lord remains unshaken.*—Earth-born clouds may veil His throne, they cannot destroy His decrees. The heavy cloud of circumstance gathered about the life of the prophet Isaiah, and he walked in uncertainty and confusion, as though his Lord had been taken away. But 'in the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord . . . high and lifted up!' Yes, but in the day of obscurity, before the robe of darkness was rent, the holy Lord was still there, and so were the cherubim, and the seraphim, and all the ministering angels of righteousness and grace. 'The Lord cometh in the thick cloud.' When Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, and the American people were stunned by the blow, a vast crowd gathered in their bewilderment around the White House, and James Garfield came out upon the balcony of the house and cried aloud, in the words of an ancient Psalmist: 'Clouds and darkness are round about him'; 'righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.'

Yes, we must distinguish between the earth-born clouds and the Divine judgments, between the battle-smoke and the great white throne. God's sovereignty may be hid, it can never be stayed or broken. And the revelation of the sovereignty of God is given not only in green pastures and in a balmy air, and under a blue and radiant sky; it is given amid social convulsions and upheavals, in the presence of menace and terror, amid the massed assemblies of material hosts. The revelation of His sovereignty is given when the pestilence is walking in darkness, and it is given when destruction is wasting at noonday. It is given when the hurricane is sweeping the land, and when all the watercourses have overflowed their banks. The Lord is revealed as King in the flood!

Mrs. Humphry Ward has put upon her canvas a striking picture of her hero as he meditates upon the perpetuity of religious faith. It is in the upper story of a bookseller's shop in Manchester that this young man comes upon the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*. His interest in religion has changed into a passionate defiance. He is in that strange state in which he applauds the contempt of the faith which he once revered, and, enthralled by the glitter of a liberalism of which France herself has wearied, the method of Voltaire delights him. It is Voltaire's article on the 'Contradictions of the Bible' in which he is absorbed. Within his narrow room the light wavers among the shadows of many books, and the softly falling rain without stills the noise of the street and leagues a silence with the

[1] Washington Gladden.

shadows in their conspiracy of repose. The young man is awake within, and he moves on from period to period and from page to page with an exultant rapture at each conquest of the Frenchman's wit. With an inward but eager shout he hails each triumph of the argument. He sees the Bible riven part from part, he finds its truth discredited, its meaning valueless. At the final stroke of malignant satire he sees the very walls of this great house-literary come falling about his ears, and he throws back his head with a laugh which comes from the very depth of him. But as he looks up from the page of the Frenchman he remembers that Voltaire is dead—has been dead a hundred years; and from without a huge image begins to form itself upon the eye. It is a vision which astounds him. For there, just outside his window, in spite of all Voltaire has done, rising nobly and with an unspeakable assurance—the spiritual home of many souls, ruled by a man rich in all modern ideas and capacities, a centre of religious life and of beneficent activity—stands a great cathedral of the Christian Church. The book which the Frenchman had apparently destroyed still has its upholders, and the institution which uses and circulates this book lives on with a vigour and prestige which the century of Voltaire did not witness and could not have imagined.

God reigns!
    His is the day,
And the night of hate
And the storm of wrath
    Shall pass away.

Love reigns!
    Hers are the years,
And the age of peace
And of kindliness
    Shall banish fears.

Truth reigns!
    God is on high,
And the pride of kings
And the lust of things
    Are doomed to die.

Consuming Fire.

Heb. xii. 29.—'Our God is a consuming fire.'

Fire, as a symbol of the Divine nature, is a most happy and expressive symbol. For if fire is the first thing we are taught to fear, do we not early learn to love it too? Do we not gladly gather round the hearth and spread our hands to its fostering warmth? Is not 'the hearth' a familiar synonym for 'the home'? Is not 'the home' the name for all that we hold most precious and dear?

All the sunniest memories rush to mind as we cluster round the hearth. All the sunniest experiences of the dead and buried years spring to vigorous life once more. All the sunniest faces—the dear, familiar faces of the long ago—smile at us again from out the glowing embers. And perhaps—who shall say?—perhaps some thought like this haunted the minds of a prophet of the Old Testament and an apostle of the New when, greatly daring, they declared that 'our God is a consuming fire'! Did they mean that, when we see Him as He is, all the holiest and sweetest and most precious treasure of the Past will be once more our own? Did they mean that in Him the sunshine of all the ages will again salute us?

1. *Fire destroys.*—Fire destroys; but it destroys the dead wood to comfort the living man. It burns *us* only when we handle it wrongly or foolishly. Fire is one day, we are told, to consume the very elements of which heaven and earth are woven; but it is only that a new fairer heaven and a new happier earth may come forth from the old earth and the old heaven as they pass away. Fire burns and destroys; nevertheless it is so much our friend, human civilization and progress and comfort depend so utterly upon it, that the wise Greeks fabled of one who was man and yet more than man, and who, in the greatness of his love for the human race, stole fire from the gods, and was content to endure an immortal agony that he might draw down this sovereign good from heaven to earth. In the Old Testament God is constantly spoken of as a fire, or as a consuming fire.

(1) The first passage in which this comparison occurs is by far the most important, as it is the root from which most similar passages have grown. In Exod. xxiv. we read that when the Israelites, in their wanderings in the wilderness, arrived at Mount Sinai, the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron, with seventy of the elders, to ascend the mountain that they might behold His glory. They climbed the mountain: 'they saw the God of Israel.' Moses was selected for a clearer vision

of the Divine Holiness and Beauty. He had to leave his brethren, to ascend a loftier summit, to enter the clouds in which the Glory of God abode. And, we are told, 'the sight of the glory of the Lord was *like devouring fire* on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.' The Divine Glory was like a devouring fire; but did it devour Moses? Nay, he dwelt amid the blazing lightnings, which stabbed the thick clouds hanging round the top of the mountain, forty days; yet he came forth from them not only unharmed, but so transfigured and glorified that the people could not endure the splendours of a face which had so long been lifted to the face of God. Even the seventy elders 'saw God and did eat and drink'; that is, they saw God and lived. But the people could not so much as touch the base of the mountain on which the Glory burned. Rude, and passionate, and stained with sin, the Glory, which to the elders seemed like that of a kindled sapphire, 'as it were the body of heaven in its clearness' when all its cloud garments are swept away, appeared to the people as 'a devouring fire.' Yet even *they* were not devoured by it; even these gross unspiritual slaves, to whom it was death to approach the lower slopes of the mountain on the summit of which the Divine Majesty shone, and to whom it seemed a mere destructive blaze piercing the dark cloud, were not destroyed by it. The Glory, which to their weak unpurged vision seemed so intolerable, came, not to consume them, but to bless them in turning them away from their iniquities. For why did God reveal Himself to Moses, save that He might give him a law, and appoint a sacrifice and ordain a ritual for the whole people? Moses beheld the Divine Glory only that *they* might behold it in due time: *he* talked face to face with God that *they* might know God to be their Friend. He was sanctified that he might be taught how to sanctify them. So that, though God appeared to men as a consuming fire, it was not to consume but to redeem them, not to devour them but to quicken and nourish them by His word.

The grand, terrible scene which accompanied the giving of the Law, the thick cloud which hung over Sinai, the lightnings which blazed through the cloud, the storm which rolled and echoed among the stern granite peaks, profoundly impressed the national imagination, and passed, as was natural and inevitable, from the chronicles of Israel to its songs. To the Psalmists or poets of Israel that scene became a constant inspiration; it recurs again and again in their writings. And the Prophets are at one with the Psalmists.

This conception of God as a consuming fire, which pervades every section of the Old Testament, also finds place in the New Testament. In our text we once more hear of God as a consuming fire; yet there is no terror in the symbol if we regard it from the inspired writer's point of view. He is exhorting us to take patiently the scourgings and chastenings of the Lord. In these chastenings we are to find keen, but conclusive, proofs that we are the sons of God, since 'the Lord scourgeth every son whom he receiveth,'—not, however, for His pleasure, but for our profit, and that we may become partakers of His holiness. We indeed are not come to the mount which burned with fire, but to Mount Zion, whose summit is crowned with the city of the living God, not with blackness and darkness and tempest. We do not stand beneath a frowning heaven, on a darkened and trembling earth, but in 'a kingdom which cannot be moved,' even when heaven and earth are shaken. Nevertheless, 'our God,' like the God whose glory burned on Sinai, 'is a consuming fire,' searching out all our secret evils and hidden lusts, burning them out of us, that we may be perfect before Him.

2. *Fire purifies.*—Are we, then, to shrink from Him, to fear and quake exceedingly so often as He draws nigh to reveal Himself to us? Nay, we are rather to 'serve him with reverence and godly fear'; we are to endure with patience and hope the fiery trials by which alone He can make us holy as He is holy, and perfect as He is perfect; we are to believe that, however grievous and painful our trials may be for the present, they are imposed on us simply because they 'yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.' In the New Testament, as in the Old, God is a consuming fire, but a fire which burns up only that which is base and worthless in us and in the world, that it may quicken, develop, mature all that is good and noble and pure.

This text was much in the thoughts of Bishop Westcott. He often quoted it in his letters. In one letter he says: 'My most serious difficulty is as

to the symbolism of fire. Fire seems to me always to have relation to something perishable which has to be removed. So it is that while in the other cases it is "God is . . . ," in this case it is said "Our God is . . . ," *i.e.*, in relation to us sinful, corrupted creatures in need of purification through chastening.'[1]

It is instructive to note that the very word for 'consuming fire' in the Greek of this passage, *pûr*, is not only radically the same as our English word (A.S. *fyr*), but is near akin in root, as in sound, to the word 'pure,' Lat. *purus* (whence *purgo, pur-igo*, to cleanse). Thus, 'fire' is literally that which *purifies*, and the word, when used of the nature of God, tells us that it is so terribly and essentially pure that it cannot but war against and destroy all that is impure. It defines His burning love as assimilating everything, like fire, to its own perfect purity. A poet so scholarly as Dr. Faber was probably conscious of this verbal connection when he thus expressed himself concerning purgatorial punishment:—

In pain beyond all earthly pains,
Favourites of Jesus, there they lie,
Letting the *fire purge* out their stains,
And worshipping God's *purity*.

Just as Byron had already said, that thence

Men may arise
Pure from the *fire* to join the angelic race.

Like a great metallurgist, the Lord sits aloft as a refiner and purifier of silver, to purify the sons of men, and to purge them as gold and silver (Mal. iii. 3). Anyone who, ignorant of his art, saw a goldsmith cast his precious metal into the glare of the red-hot crucible might imagine that he valued it lightly and held it of little worth, whereas, in truth, he values it so highly that he wants to have it better. He exposes it to that fiery ordeal only that it may be cleansed from some hidden baseness, some impure alloy with which it has got mingled. All that is not pure and sterling metal the fire devours as if it were chaff. It is said that the refiner knows that this object is attained when he is able to see his own face reflected, as in a mirror, in the little pool of glowing metal. And this is just what God desires when He submits us to the fiery trial—so to purify our nature that He may see His own likeness once more in us. In the characters of even the best of men there is something of this dross and defilement contracted in their way through the world. Their evil desires and evil habits must be burnt out, so that, baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, they may acquire that purity of heart which will enable them to see God.

One thing I of the Lord desire—
For all my way hath miry been—
Be it by water or by fire,
Oh, make me clean!

. . . . . .

So wash Thou me without, within,
Or purge with fire, if that must be:
No matter how, if only sin
Die out in me.[1]

3. *Fire fertilizes.*—But fire not only purifies, it fertilizes. It fertilizes in this way—by destroying evil, noxious things, it gives beautiful and worthy things a chance to grow and flourish. Suppose you have a garden overrun with briars, and thorns, and weeds. If you want that garden to do anything in the way of fruit and flowers, what is the first step to be taken? All the thorns, and briars, and weeds have to be torn up and destroyed.

¶ I remember often-times seeing, when I was a lad in Wales, a whole mountainside ablaze—furze, and heather, and bracken all burning together in one fierce conflagration. Sometimes we could see the flames: sometimes it was the lurid glare in the sky that told us the work of destruction was going on somewhere. And in the morning the mountain would reveal itself all black and burnt, scorched and bare. Mere destruction, one might be tempted to say, and indeed, as a lad I never saw one of those fires without a certain fear. And yet the farmer, in every case, had started the fire deliberately. He knew well what he was about. When the spring came back that black, charred mountain side was all covered with luxuriant green. The fire had destroyed only what was worthless to the farmer, had made a way for better and more useful growths to spring up. And it is exactly so with us. Our hearts are over-run with briars and thorns in the shape of our passions and

[1] *Brooke Foss Westcott*, ii, 83.

[1] Walter C. Smith.

sins; and these passions and sins of ours prevent the upspringing of those seeds of goodness that lie buried in every human heart. You remember what our Lord Himself said: 'The care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word.' That is it; these noxious growths make it impossible for useful and worthy growths to live. And so God comes as the consuming fire to burn up and destroy these briars and thorns of the heart; our sins and impurities shrivel and perish in His fierce flame; but the result of it all is a sweet and fragrant crop of the flowers of the virtues and the fruits of the spirit. He burned out Peter's cowardice that courage might flourish, and John's intolerance that love might grow, and Paul's pharisaic pride that peace might spring up. I repeat, this is not a threat. It is a promise. Fire is a great fertilizer, and there is a promise of a rich spiritual spring-time in this word 'Our God is a consuming fire.'[1]

Love of the Brethren.

Heb. xiii. 1.—'Let love of the brethren continue' (RV).

This title 'brethren,' as the characteristic name of Christians, has grown so familiar that we forget that it was a gift of the Gospel to the world. It was indeed the gift of the Risen Lord. He Himself bestowed it upon His infant Church when He said to Mary Magdalene, 'Go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.'

And the gift was at once welcomed. We find the title adopted in the earliest record of the corporate life of the Church. In the first chapter of the Acts we read that St. Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren, when he counselled them to complete the number of the twelve by electing one of their number in place of Judas. Thenceforward 'brethren' has continued to be the characteristic title of Christians, even though its peculiar force has been left out of sight.

For Christians, we need to remind ourselves, as Christians, are brethren. This close fellowship belongs to them, not as men, but as believers. Baptized into Christ, they have in common as members of Christ, the children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven,' all that goes to form the most perfect brotherhood. The one Faith is the source, the sanction, the support of their connexion. The acknowledgment of this brotherhood, indeed, more enduring, more sovereign than the brotherhood of blood, comes to us in virtue of the confession of the fact of the Incarnation. The feeling by which the Christian society is held together, the feeling by which all who are united in it are inspired, is the love of the brethren; and this relationship which is realized by Christians is potentially, in virtue of the Incarnation, the inheritance of men.

The word, which is rightly rendered 'love of the brethren' in the Revised Version, occurs five times in the New Testament. If we take these five passages just as they stand we shall learn better than in any other way what is the source, the scope, the importance of the feeling: how it is a true test of the reality of our faith, and the Divine way to the largest offices of love.

1. The virtue occupies a conspicuous place in the earliest letter of St. Paul—probably the earliest Christian document which has come down to us—'Concerning love of the brethren,' the Apostle writes to the Thessalonians, 'ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.' We may well wonder at the words when we remember that St. Paul had instructed these new converts for not more than three or four weeks, and yet see that, writing to them a few months afterwards, he is assured, not only that they were familiar with this practical consequence of the faith which they had lately embraced, but that they had realized it in life. 'Love of the brethren' was for them found to be one of the first lessons of the Creed, and it was a Divine lesson. Thus our wonder at their rapid progress will cease when we notice the ground of the Apostle's confidence. God Himself had been their teacher. God Himself had revealed to their hearts the meaning of the Gospel. Love of the brethren follows necessarily from the foundation truth of Christianity, but God alone can bring home the truth to the soul of the hearer. 'No man can say,' St. Paul writes elsewhere, 'Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit.' This vital belief that Jesus is Lord is, for all who hold it, a proof of their Divine Sonship,

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Unfettered Word*, 160.

a declaration of brotherhood with their fellow-believers. 'Whosoever,' St. John says, 'believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is begotten of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.' All believers know that they have one Father, if their belief is real: they know, therefore, that they are brethren. They need no motive for affection. They cannot but love one another.

2. Here, then, we learn the origin of 'the love of the brethren' among Christians in the common feeling of sonship involved in the living conviction that the Son of God has taken our nature to Himself. But how are we to apply the feeling to conduct? St. Paul answers the question in his injunctions to the Romans. 'In love of the brethren,' he writes, 'be tenderly affectioned one to another.' We must, that is, transfer all the graces of the natural family to the household of faith. No word could be more expressive than that which is rendered 'tenderly affectioned.' It includes the love of husband and wife, of parent and child, of brother and sister, the love, in a word, which hallows and ennobles the typical relations of difference, of authority, of equality which must exist among us. In whatever position we may stand one to another in the circumstances of earth, we have in the family an image of our respective duties; and the Christian faith takes that image, and fills it with a quickening force, able to bring into a gracious harmony the various conditions of men. Diversities are not removed, but ennobled and hallowed; and if only we could welcome this teaching for our own guidance, what peace and joy and righteousness it would bring into our daily dealing, what considerateness it would give to power, what beauty to service; how it would banish every feeling of jealousy, and lighten the burden of great possessions through a sense of a fellowship of life.

It is said that when a king of Lydia asked one of the old sages of Greece 'if he had wealth enough,' he replied, 'Twice as much as I could wish, for my brother is dead.' If we extend the spirit of the answer to the Christian brotherhood, we can see how the first Christians refused to say that anything they had was their own. We can see how we must, if we are faithful, use all that is committed to us as stewards for the common good.

3. The maintenance of such a temper is not easy. A thousand influences tend to separate us: to obscure by superficial veils that which is deepest: to turn our attention from the eternal to the transitory. Therefore the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the most human, the most pathetic, of the books of the New Testament, says, 'Let love of the brethren continue.' Those whom he addressed were called to make great sacrifices; to surrender much that was dear to them by long use; to face heavy disappointments and bitter reproaches. Old ties had to be broken. In this season of unrest and trial the close communion of believers became more precious than before. The Hebrews had once known what it was; they were charged to preserve it. Whatever might be lost by them through the dissolving of former friendships could be found again in this closer brotherhood, a love begun to last for ever. Whatever might be lost through their exclusion from a share in the time-hallowed ritual of the Temple would be more than compensated by the sense of the presence of their Lord in their humble assemblies. There could be no isolation for those who were united by a vital bond with men and God, no dependence upon earthly accessories, however majestic, for those who found God in the simplest circumstances of life. Perhaps we ourselves need this assurance still. It is of priceless value to us, when many traditional forms of belief are shaken, to be constrained to turn to Christ Himself, and to recognize that He is with us still, and to feel the proof of His Presence in the fellowship which His Spirit quickens and sustains. So it is that our very temptations and sorrows place the apostolic command upon us with more than its first authority: 'Let love of the brethren continue.'

4. This love, as we have seen, springs from the acceptance of the Christian faith. But acceptance must be of the life and not of the reason only. The truth must be embodied, and not simply held or defended. Thus 'love of the brethren' becomes a test of the sincerity of our Christian profession. So St. Peter writes: 'Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again . . . through the word of God, which liveth and abideth.' Obedience to the gospel must go before

the fruits of the gospel. By the discipline of obedience the Lord Himself was made perfect; and there is no other way to that love by which He said that His disciples should be known. At the same time the range of obedience is continually increased as we learn more fully the meaning of our faith, and together with the range of obedience the range of love also. A Christian cannot be occupied with his own things alone. We wrong our creed grievously when we allow it to be thought that our efforts are concentrated on securing our own happiness. The one way of growth is service. Our first privilege, the first gift bestowed on us by God in baptism, is that we are made 'members' of a body. We are, and this is the noblest opportunity of life—our brothers' keepers. We rejoice in their joy and are gladdened by their success. 'Whenever a godly man sees his Father's image,' it has been well said, 'he is forced to love it.' Wherever the works of the Spirit are manifest, there is boundless hope.

5. So far we have been led to consider the action of the love of the brethren upon Christians one with another, upon the brethren themselves. But it has a larger issue. In his Second Epistle St. Peter thus marks the two last steps in the development of the Christian character: 'In your godliness—your godly reverence—supply love of the brethren, and in your love of the brethren, love.' Love of the brethren makes us, through happy experience, to rate at their true value all transitory differences between man and man. It supplies a solid foundation for 'philanthropy,' not as a vague general feeling, but as a personal connexion answering to the will of God. He who is not our brother in the unity of the body is still our neighbour. Our Christian faith must affect our view of the whole world and of all men. Love of the brethren enlarges our vision. The command, 'Honour all men,' strange as it must seem at first sight, when we realise its extent can be met by all believers with an intelligent welcome. For the most forlorn and wilful of men Christ died and rose again. Love of the brethren, therefore, carries us on to love, and at last, when perfected, shows us to be partakers of the Divine nature, for God is love.

¶ Butler's two sermons on the love of your neighbour, are summed up, says Dr. Whyte, in this closing prayer: 'O Almighty God, inspire us with this divine principle of brotherly love. Kill in us all the seeds of envy and ill-will. And help us, by cultivating within ourselves the love of our neighbour, to improve in the love of Thee. Thou hast placed us in various kindreds, friendships, and relations, as the school of discipline for our affections. Help us, by the due exercise of all these, to improve to perfection, till all partial affection be lost in that entire universal one, and Thou, O God, shalt be all in all.'[1]

Entertaining Angels.

Heb. xiii. 2.—'Some have entertained angels unawares.'

Ye gave me of your broken meat,
And of your lees of wine,
That I should sit and sing for you,
All at your banquet fine.

Ye gave me shelter from the storm,
And straw to make my bed,
And let me sleep through the wild night
With cattle in the shed.

Ye know not from what lordly feast
Hither I came this night,
Nor to what lodging with the stars
From hence I take my flight.[2]

1. In a recent novel, where great power is on the whole misdirected, there is one sentence that cannot easily be forgotten. A stern old mother has a daughter given to writing. The mother disapproves, but when the daughter dies we are told that what her mother used to speak of as 'verses' she always afterwards called 'poems.' That is what death does for our loved ones. It changes their verses into poems. Were we to write for ever we could not say a word more. Everything is then transfigured and stands out in a new light, a light in which we could not see it while the dear ones were yet with us. But we know them now.

However much we cared for them, however deeply we understood them, however we looked up to them, we know them better now. Even here we understood their truth and pity and patient loving kindness, but now everything comes more nearly and dearly home. In a measure our eyes

[1] A. Whyte, *Thirteen Appreciations*. 248.
[2] C. F. Smith.

were holden, but they have been open long since. Now that the past is cast upon a ground of wonder it seems comprehensible, and we marvel that we were so dull. The loves that have been taken from us, the venerating regard of childhood, the passion of youth, the restful affection of mature years, the trust of lost little children, the kind, true friendships that we hoped would bridge over all the changes—we know how to prize them as we sit with our yearning and sometimes remorseful thoughts. Were they faultless? Perhaps they were not, but whatever there was of frailty, imperfection, ignorance, was no true part of their redeemed being, and has all fallen from them now. Others may recall such things, but we cannot. Our forgetfulness is even as the forgetfulness of God, who casts our sins behind His back, and neither remembers them nor, if we may dare to say it, can remember them.

'T is only when they spring to heaven that angels
Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day
Beside you, and lie down at night by you
Who care not for their presence, muse or sleep,
And all at once they leave you, and you know them! [1]

2. The Ideal was once among us, and we beheld His glory, and did not know it for the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. While He tabernacled among men they doubted Him, questioned Him, criticized Him, scorned Him. It was not till He was taken from them that the full truth burst upon their sight. He knew that it would be so. As He neared the Great Altar where He offered up the Perfect Sacrifice, He said that He would send the Spirit to reprove the world of righteousness, 'because I go to my Father, and *ye see me no more.*' Not till He had gone from the region of sight would the Holy Spirit stir them to know what He was. The mighty God, even the Lord, had spoken and called the earth from the rising of the true Sun at Bethlehem till the going down thereof on Mount Calvary. But He had spoken and called in vain. When the Bread of Life was hungry and the Fountain of Mercy was athirst, when the strength of God was weak and the Eternal made subject to death, men did not know that out of Sion, the perfection of beauty, God had shined. But they did know Him when He died, when at last with His pierced hands He had planted His vineyard on a very fruitful hill. When He was first nailed to the tree they passed by wagging their heads; but when all was over, when at the prayer of the malefactor He restored the lost Eden, when at His dying brow the sun went out like an ember, when He bowed His meek head and commended His Spirit to the Father, there was not a word more of insult or of scorn. When the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus saw the earthquake, they feared greatly, saying, 'Truly this was the Son of God.' In a hush of love and reverence He was laid in His new tomb, and since that hour He has been the Hope, the Glory, the Ideal, and the Crown of our fallen humanity.

It is in Him that the dead are living and the lost are found. It is in Him that

We give blind grief and blinder sense the lie,
And say, 'They did not live to die.'

It is in Him that the golden hope of immortality, so often clouded, springs unbaffled from its sleep. In Him the soul's prevision in its moments of intensest life is true, the very truth of truths. It is through Him we know that we cannot idealize the dead, that they are more lovely and gracious than our loveliest and most gracious dreams. In Him the promises of God are Yea, and in Him Amen. And so it is to Him, to His Cross, and His Resurrection that all our hopes are nailed.

3. But sometimes the stranger to be entertained is no unwelcome guest. Yet let us entertain him—even if he be that last enemy called death.

¶ One of the saintliest ministers in our Free Church once told me the story of his sanctification. They had a child, an only child, and God was pleased to let it sicken till it was near to death. There was no hope; and the father's and the mother's heart rebelled, and they cried that this was hard. But only for a little. Their trust in God was in eclipse, not quenched. 'Wife,' said the husband, 'we must not let God *take* our child. We must *give* him.' So kneeling down beside the bed together, they humbly gave to God again what He had lent them for a little space. Death came, a stranger to that home, and knocked. At first

[1] Browning, *Paracelsus*.

they barred the gate, then entertained him. And in the fragrance of two consecrated lives, never a man or child in all their parish but knows they entertained an angel unawares.[1]

Sympathy.

Heb. xiii. 3.—'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.'

REVERENCE is the spirit of the Christian towards that which is above him, and sympathy is his spirit towards that which is about him. That which is above is summed up in God; that which is about us is summed up in man. We must not, however, forget that each of the four traits of Christian character—reverence, sympathy, tenderness, vigilance—extends beyond its peculiar sphere and influences our whole feeling. Thus, reverence, which is turned primarily to God, discovers God in Humanity and Nature, and does homage to Him in His works. And so sympathy, which is turned primarily to man, has also a wider application towards Nature.

We speak of sympathy as a feeling *for* others, whereas it is, in the fullest sense of the phrase, a feeling *with* others. Sympathy is not from without, not from above, as of one who looks afar off upon some object which moves his pity; it is from within, and reaches to our whole being. He who really sympathizes has, in the true language of the heart entered into the feelings of another and made them his own. That which moves him belongs not to a stranger but to himself; he has mastered so far the secret of a true communion of life.

1. We owe to those who are about us, to those who are brought near to us by ties of birth or of choice, deeds of thought and deeds of affection which require to be discharged. To leave them unpaid is to defraud our spiritual creditors by a failure more disastrous and more discreditable than any outward bankruptcy. Yet we think but little of these unseen, inward claims which concern the lasting wealth of life. Sympathy alone, the feeling of what we are to others and what others are to us, reveals and enforces them, and such sympathy is the prerogative of man; for while it is the Divine law that all creation should be sustained by the mutual services of every part, man alone, so far as we know, is allowed to see the destiny of his service, and to serve with the joy of freedom.

[1] G. H. Morrison, *Flood-tide*, 278.

At an exceeding price
This gift one buys—
This dear enfranchisement—to sympathize;
They show it not with lace of old device,
Missals, and tapestries.

By every anguished bed
To rear a throne,
To hold the heart of Sorrow in thine own;
Out of thy hand to have cool slumber shed,
And hearing from thy tone;

To bear the blessed face,
The saving eyes,
That Sorrow's wistful children recognize;
To draw as to a safe and lighted place,
All that is lost and cries;

That is the pearl outweighs
All fond renown:
None ever bought it with an emperor's crown;
The milk of Heaven doth light its cloudy rays
That shine all glories down.

Oh, far away and deep
This pearl doth hide:
Folk do not find it on the soft hill-side;
You ask the way upon a scalpèd steep
Where hangs One crucified.[1]

2. The service of sympathy costs us something, but it brings abundant compensation. St. Paul has told us the secret of his unmatched influence. 'I am become,' he says, 'all things to all men.' His influence flowed, that is, from his sympathy, and the transformation wrought in him by sympathy was a reality and not a superficial imitation. It is always so. Just as the great poet lives in the characters which he creates, so the great teacher makes himself the true fellow of his scholars; he regards things with their eyes, he reflects on them with their thoughts; he offers his lessons to them in the form which answers to their condition; he wins them to a larger knowledge because he enables them to see how the new grows from the old,

[1] F. Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 41.

guards their peculiar treasures, and makes these also tributary to their interpretation of his message. As it is with the great teacher, so it is with the great leader. He who sways men must be one with them, however far removed by his personal gifts. For sympathy is not the communion of like with like, but the power of uniting things different in the embrace of a greater life. Sympathy, therefore, preserves those small differences answering to our individuality, on which the beauty of the whole order of things depends. It does not only give; it receives. He who enters into the feelings of others becomes partaker of their energy. It does not only offer; it claims. He who is seen to sacrifice himself freely for the service of another can justly demand a service corresponding to his own.

3. Christ Himself is the perennial spring, the absolute rule of sympathy—of the sympathy which interprets and unites man to man and nation to nation. We can know others only by knowing Him; we can serve others only through Him, present everywhere in the humanity which He has redeemed. We must work, not for ourselves, as conscious of a heavenly destiny; not for men, as conscious of our inevitable connection with them, but for Christ first, and He will then work through us. Nothing less can sustain us, and for the least this support is available. The sympathy of Christ reaches to the utmost verge of thought, and it reaches the weakest. He who said, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,' said also, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.' From one class only He turned aside as inaccessible to His love till they had felt His chastisement—the men who stood apart from others in the pride of culture and knowledge, in the satisfaction of outward righteousness, the men who said of those who had found in the prophet of Nazareth the purifying energy of a new life, 'This multitude which knoweth not the law are accursed.' Yet even here sympathy had its perfect work, for sympathy is no blind surrender to another's will, no timorous pity. There are times when it must take the form of sternest judgment, times when it can prove its wise sincerity only through the sharp pain of necessary discipline.

These thoughts of sympathy belong to us all, both in our close relationships and in our widest aspirations. Not one suffering of the most desolate is foreign to us; not one affliction lies beyond the possibilities of our own experience. 'Remember them that are in bonds,' the Apostle says, 'as bound with them,' as actually sharing in very truth what they endure; 'them that are evil entreated, as being yourselves also in the body,' and therefore exposed to the worst fancies of life. The words were written in view of the persecutions to which the first Christians were exposed, but they cannot be limited to any single application. During the eighteen centuries which have passed since the command was given the facts of the fellowship of man, of the power of the presence of Christ have been displayed in countless forms. If only we could trust the voice of the Spirit with unhesitating self-surrender, and use the forces within our reach, forgetting our own weakness, the end for which we wait would be within measurable distance—the end when the strivings of sympathy shall pass into the unity of one Divine life, and God shall be all in all.

Contentment.

Heb. xiii. 5.—'Be content with such things as ye have.'

THERE is a great deal of sound common sense in this advice. Do not reach after the stars, nor cry for the moon, nor clamour for the gratification of impossible desires. Be satisfied. Try to keep in good humour with your circumstances. Do not pick a quarrel with your position in life.

1. Be content with your *gifts*. Remember God Himself is the distributor of all possession and endowment. If, therefore, you are more slenderly endowed than others, it is enough for you to know that it is God who has so settled it. If that be so, you at once get rid of the devil of envy and jealousy. You ought to be content with your two talents, though the man next you happens to have received five. The most difficult of all possessions, it has been said, is the one talent and a half, which sometimes comes so very near the two that it has a special temptation to vex itself and find fault with God. So very little more would have made your one talent and a half into two: why was that little more withheld? Wiser for you not to raise that question. Be content with what you have.

2. Be content with your *lot in life*. It is vanity that disturbs the world; it is illegitimate, unnatural ambition that keeps so many lives in a fever. Sydney Smith, when labouring in an obscure Yorkshire village, though he did not feel himself to be in his proper element, went cheerily to work in the firm determination to do his best. 'I am resolved,' he said, 'to like it and reconcile myself to it, which is more manly than to feign myself above it, and to send up complaints by the post of being thrown away, and being desolate, and such like trash.'

3. Be content with *whatever measure of this world's goods* may fall to your lot. You have, at any rate, all that is indispensable. You have food, and raiment, and health, and sound sleep, and a happy home. As for the luxuries and *et ceteras*, be of the same mind as Socrates, who, on being shown over some large emporium, was overheard to say, 'How many things there are here which I do not want!'

¶ Professor W. G. Blaikie, of the New College, in Edinburgh, in his *Recollections of a Busy Life*, tells of an aged man, who had been employed all his life as a labourer in a foundry, but who had the misfortune to turn too old and get his leave. He was a godly man, and his wife, a gentle and simple-hearted creature, was like minded. Hearing of what had happened, I went to condole with them, expecting to find them somewhat troubled and anxious. What was my relief when they greeted me with their accustomed smile, bright and happy. "God has been mindful of us," said the woman, "and we have never wanted a meal." "And it's been pleasant," said the man, "to sit at the fireside and hae such fine cracks about Providence." Friends were kind to them, and every act of kindness was referred to the gracious Providence above. If I preached to them on other occasions, they certainly preached to me on this.'

SECURITY.

Heb. xiii. 5, 6 (Moffatt).—'Be content with what you have, for He has said, Never will I fail you, never will I forsake you. So that we can say confidently, The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can men do to me?'

One of the greatest poems of the nineteenth century, and one of the greatest religious poems in our literature, is Francis Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven*. The poet is very bold. He likens God to a great Hound that follows up on the track of men. This Hound does not seek their blood but their salvation. They flee from Him, and take refuge in pleasure, in sin, in this and that.

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.

But the Hound seeks them out. He never relaxes the pursuit. You hear the pad, pad of His feet all through the poem.

Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat—
'Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me.'

It is great poetry; but it is still greater religion. It is just the outstanding, supreme truth of the Gospels, nay of the New Testament—the unrelaxing, persistent, eternally pursuing love of a Redeemer.

That is the truth in this great text: 'Never will I fail you, never will I forsake you.' It is the expression of the central message of the gospel. In the 15th chapter of St. Luke Jesus depicts the shepherd seeking a lost sheep, and the shepherd goes on seeking 'until he finds it.' The woman also, searching for a lost piece of money, searches 'until she finds it.' These words have always seemed to us the golden words of the Gospels. God seeks and seeks, God pursues and pursues, *until He finds*. He never gives up, He never lets go. The feet of the divine Hound pad, pad after the lost soul until they run him down. That is the meaning of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. And, if one seeks an expression of the same fact outside the Gospels, there is a glorious example in the eighth chapter of Romans, where St. Paul cries in one of his great passages: 'I am persuaded that

nothing in the world or out of it can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' 'Never will I fail you, never will I forsake you.'

The words, you observe, are a quotation. They come from the Old Testament. They are found repeatedly there. When Israel was entering on the enterprise of the conquest of Canaan, which seemed so impossible, this message was sent to her: 'Be strong and of a good courage . . . for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.' Again, when Joshua at a critical moment had laid on him the responsibility of leadership, the same encouraging assurance was given to him: 'As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage.' The words run like a refrain through the story of the older Dispensation. Again and again to people and to leaders came the same heartening encouragement. God is faithful. He will not let men down. He will never for a moment be absent from their side. Never will He fail you, never will He forsake you.

I.

Such is the general tenor of this promise. But the words open out, and present interesting applications of the truth, when we examine them carefully. Each of the two clauses contains a particular side of the general truth. We may put them briefly thus: *The security of God's hold of us; and the loyalty of God to His children.*

1. *The security of God's hold.* The word 'fail' means literally to slacken, to let go, to loosen. It is used in the account of St. Paul's shipwreck to describe the way they let the rudder fly when they were driving ashore: 'They committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands.' It is used in the account of the earthquake at Philippi, when the doors of the prison were opened and 'every one's bands were loosed.' Coleridge tells us that when we wish to find the real meaning of a word we should seek for the visual image in it. The visual image in the word 'fail' is something like the following. You have seen a boy being taught to swim. The boy wears something that has a rope attached to it. The teacher holds the end of the rope and stands on the bank of the stream. There is plenty of rope to allow the boy to make his own efforts. He may splutter and strike out and sink, but he cannot drown, for the teacher holds the rope and *will not let him go.* That is the meaning here. God never lets us go. He gives us plenty of rope. We have freedom to manage our own lives. The freedom may be limited, but, within the limits, it is real. God stands off from us and gives us room for the exercise of our own will. We make lots of mistakes. We have enough rope to let us sink sometimes. There would be nothing great or good in life if this were not true. Whatever praise we earn, whatever we achieve, we earn and achieve because we are free to do it. Whatever errors we are guilty of are due to our own use of our liberty. But behind all this is the great security that God holds us fast and will not let us go. The Hound of Heaven is at our heels always and everywhere. However far we roam we can never go outside the reach of that persistent love. However deep we sink, we can never sink beneath the everlasting arms. Though we mar our lives, we cannot mar them beyond God's power to heal and renew.

Oh the little birds sang east and the little birds sang west,
And I smiled to think God's goodness flows around our incompleteness,
Round our restlessness His rest.

The greatness of this truth is seen only when we think of what it implies.

(1) It implies this, for one thing, that our salvation depends on God's hold of us and not on our hold of God. It is true that our hold of God is important. It is important because all our experience of His grace depends on it, all the working out of salvation in our life depends on it, all our joy in God, all the power we can get from God, all peace and holiness. God can do little for us unless through our faith. In one of his sermons Phillips Brooks says that the love of God is like a great tide of water pressing in on a breakwater, immense power in it, promise of infinite refreshment and fruitfulness, if only it can find a way in. The life of God presses on our life like that, seeking to bless us with its gifts. And it is our response that makes the blessing possible. That is true, but in the end the deepest thing in salvation is God's hold of us. That is the secret of every-

thing, of our repentings, of our longings for better things, of the hope there is for any of us. If it depended on us we might sink in the waters. We may often lose hold of God, but God never lets us go. It has been said that 'the perseverance of the saints consists of ever new beginnings,' and if that is true it is because God holds us fast. Think of the times when we nearly threw away our lives in folly or wrong, when only by the sheer mercy of God, and because He stretched out His hand and drew us back, we escaped. Everybody has memories of that kind. It is because of God's unrelaxing hold of the other end of the rope that we have not been utterly cast away.

(2) It implies also that we cannot get beyond the hope of recovery. We may be allowed to go very far, simply because it is our business to work out our own salvation and because it is good, nay essential, that we should taste the misery of the far country. But we cannot sin ourselves out of reach of God. We set limits to the love of God, but there are no limits. It was an orthodox Puritan who said that one of the surprises of eternity will be the disclosure that we have thought too meanly of the mercy of God. At any rate we may say confidently, on the authority of our text, that there never is a moment of our days in which the hand of God is not on us, and that however far we may go into the country of our own wayward desires, God accompanies us and He never lets us go. The prodigal never got beyond his father's thought and care. And we never get outside the saving grace of God. Never? At any time? Anywhere? These are big questions. But listen to what the text says, and think it out. '*Never* will I let you go.' This does not necessarily imply universal salvation. If it did it would make nothing of the human will. It does not necessarily imply salvation in any life *here*, as we see every day and in countless cases. But it means that God seeks and seeks, and pursues and pursues, and holds us always by His hand.

(3) There are times in our lives when this is just what we need to hear and to believe. There are times of weariness and heart-sickness, for example, when it is everything to know that God has us in His hands, times when we can do nothing more, and hope and inspiration have died out of our hearts. At such times what we need to know is that, if we cannot do anything, we don't *need* to do anything. God is doing all that is necessary. That was what Elijah learned when he wanted to lie down and die. He learned that God was working, that God was behind all his life and ministry, that God was with him and using him, that God was *there*. It is a great thing to have this just to fall back on, to know that God is everything and I am nothing.

> O Love that wilt not let me go,
> I rest my weary soul on Thee.

There are times also when our hold on God becomes feeble and we lose touch with Him, when we are tempted to doubt the reality of our own past experience, when the very existence of a spiritual world seems doubtful and the gospel becomes unreal. Well, it is an infinite comfort to know that even when our hold on God slackens His hold on us never does. However it may be with our enjoyment of God and our certainty of God, the *fact* of His grip of us is sure. We can lean back on that and find peace in it when everything that can be called spiritual experience has faded out of our souls. God is at the other end of the rope, and our true resource is to carry every hope and effort back to that fact.

2. *The loyalty of God to His children*—'Never will I *forsake* you.' Perhaps the best paraphrase of this would be: 'Never will I leave you in the lurch.' The 'lurch' is an expression for the losing position in the game of cribbage, the point of the game when all the odds are against one player. And that is just the exact shade of meaning which the word in our text bears. It is used by St. Paul when he tells how at his trial in Rome all his friends turned from him. They left him in the lurch. It occurs in 2 Cor. iv. 9: 'Persecuted—yes, but not abandoned' (Moffatt), and in the solemn words of Jesus on the Cross: 'My God, my God, why hast thou abandoned me?' In all these passages the implication is the same. Men are in extremity. They are figthing a losing battle. They are at the last line of defence. Hope is almost gone.

This is the time when too often *human* help fails. Not long ago a minister was calling from door to door in his own part of a city. He came upon a lady who had ceased to attend church. She spoke bitterly of Christians and said she had given

up all belief in religion. Why? The reason came out in the course of the conversation. She had once been well-off, but had lost her money. When this happened, she declared, all her former friends turned their backs on her. And they had been religious, church-going people. This had embittered her. It was like a blow to a man who is down. That may be a common experience. When Jesus was arrested and His Cause seemed broken, all His disciples 'forsook' Him and fled. And when men are broken in fortune, or have lost their reputation through their own wrong-doing, they often find the way back hard because so few hands are stretched out to help.

Now the whole significance of the second clause of our text is this: that it is just in these circumstances that *God's* help is readiest and nearest. He stands by men in a losing fight. He comes to them when they are in the 'lurch.' Never will I forsake you. This is the burden of our Lord's great promise of 'another Comforter.' The word means 'Advocate,' one who stands by you and takes up your case when your back is to the wall. The disciples were to lose Jesus in the flesh. They were going out to face a hostile world with all men against them. But they were to have One at their side who would fight with them and for them in what seemed to human eyes a hopelessly losing battle.

To see how great a gospel is in this promise we have only to think how often men do find themselves in this losing position.

(1) Take the commonest case—our conflict with sin in our hearts. There are people who all their days are fighting this battle against long odds. Their nature may make the issue doubtful. Inherited tendencies make victory hard. Their circumstances make it hard. Their temptations make it hard. Many a man is tempted to give up in despair. He seems to have no power in himself, and against him are all the forces that have so often brought him to the ground. It is men in this condition who need to hear such a heartening word as this. God not only has a hold of us but He is at the side of every man who is battling for purity in his heart, and He is there to bring help and recovery and redemption. He is working on the side of every upward prayer and effort, and if men will give Him the chance, He will bring them to victory. Every earnest desire for better things, every prayer from the depths, every cry for help God will take hold of and use it to lift men out of defeat. No man need fight his battle alone, and none need ever give up. The present Bishop of London tells of a young factory girl who in the midst of her temptations and difficulties found safety in the prayer that rose from her heart: 'Jesus, help me.' To that cry came the answering strength of the Divine grace.

(2) There is a case quite as common where the need of this encouragement is as great. It is the case of those who are serving some great Cause. There is abundant reason for depression, sometimes for despair, in such a service. The brave men who were contending for the liberation of slaves must often have been tempted to give up. All the vested interests were against them. Even the Bible seemed against them. For a time they stood almost alone. The Foreign Mission enterprise had the same battle to wage against custom and prejudice and tradition. What could a little Northampton shoemaker do against the entrenched indifference of the religious world and the dark mass of heathenism? The history of the Christian Church itself suggests a similar picture. From the time when the few disciples set out on the great Adventure in a world that was hardly aware of their existence, an adventure that seemed merely laughable in face of the majesty and might of Rome, to the present day with its materialism and unbelief, the task of the Church has seemed almost a hopeless one. The Church has always been fighting what seemed like a losing battle. Looking at the slums of our cities, at the state of the world, so untouched apparently by the appeal of the gospel, at the international rivalries and jealousies, at the great seething life of the non-Christian peoples, one is disposed to ask: Has anything been done? Is not our effort little better than a failure?

To all fighters in such causes comes the great word of the text: Never will I leave you when you are fighting a losing battle. The cause is God's and He will not turn His back on it, or on those who are serving it. You may be the only one left to uphold it, but because God is with you it will win. How often this has happened! The slaves are free to-day; the Foreign Mission enterprise never was so powerful or so hopeful; the

Christian Church has never been more alive or more really influential in the world. A noted general, addressing a gathering of chaplains during the War, said to them: 'Speak to the men often about the Cause, for men won't fight without a Cause.' And if the Cause is God's and we are serving it we need not lose heart or hope, for Himself hath said: Never will I forsake you.

(3) How full of inspiration this word is to many among us who are doing difficult work that often seems fruitless. Preaching, for example, or teaching in a Sunday School, or training a family of boys and girls. It is like casting bread on the waters. Many a preacher, starting with high ideals and expectations, sees so little result of all his labour and prayer that his heart becomes sore and he is tempted to sink down into a mere hack. We all have this temptation. But how often, and in what countless ways, has this promise been nobly fulfilled. History and biography are full of instances of great results coming from little causes, of a word spoken sinking deep into a life and producing character or faith or a great career of devotion. Work for a great end has God in it and when God is in it it will come to its end in a ripe harvest. Never will I forsake you.

II.

Now, briefly, for what the old preachers called the 'uses' of this promise.

1. Recently an eminent divine, the Rev. R. J. Campbell, was laid aside by a serious illness. On his recovery he wrote and published the following witness. 'If I were asked to say first what it is that has most vividly impressed itself upon my passive consciousness in these months of enforced sequestration from active service and human fellowship I think the answer would be a strong realisation of the immanence of God in the affairs of mankind . . . never for a single instant does He loose His hold upon man or nation, and it rests with Him and not with us to decide the future. Nothing earthly has escaped from His control, be appearances what they may; and nothing matters save in its spiritual reactions. Oh, the comfort of knowing this, and the sweetness of resting one's soul upon it!'

2. That is one 'use'—*confidence in the Divine government of the world*. Another is made by the writer of Hebrews—*courage for our own hearts:* 'so that we may boldly say, "the Lord is my Helper. I will not be afraid. What can men do to me?' Sir James Barrie recently told the students of St. Andrews' University that courage is the golden word of life. And so it is. What brings us to ineffectiveness oftentimes is *fear,* fear of the future, fear of circumstances, distrust of ourselves. We need a great-hearted attitude to life and to our task and to our enemies. And if we believe in God and God's hold of us and God's loyalty to us, all fear will be purged from our hearts. And with fear goes half our weakness. The courage that never knows when it is beaten comes from the faith that God will not leave us in the lurch.

3. But the greatest 'use' of this text is to *use* it! There is a significant touch in the text which the AV misses; and even Dr. Moffatt misses it. But the RV has it. 'So that we may boldly say', is the AV. 'So that we can say confidently', is Dr. Moffatt. The RV hits the mark with 'So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my Helper'. It is not we 'may' or 'can' say, but we *do* say. The writer makes instant use of the promise. He there and then casts himself upon it. The good of such a promise is found when we test it. Here is a great word. The writer quotes it to people who needed encouragement. And his own response is to use it at once. 'So that . . . we *say,* the Lord is my Helper'. This is what the word of God needs, and what it does not always get. We listen to sermons, we read the Word, and we go away with only a general, vague impression of good. But let us say, 'Yes, that is true. I act on it now, in my life, in my condition, in my difficult task, in my despair, in my failure. Yes, *I* here and now say with a new courage, The Lord is my Helper'. That is the 'use' that brings peace and power and victory.[1]

The Unchanging Christ.

Heb. xiii. 8.—'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever' (RV).

THE Epistle to the Hebrews was written at a time of great political and religious agitation.

F. J. Rae.

The Jewish State was still existing, but it was plainly drawing near to its end. Change and unrest were in the very air, and everything pointed to a swift, sudden, and disastrous national upheaval. The fanatics who then ruled at Jerusalem were powerless to avert the coming storm of destruction; they seemed blind to the fact that such a storm was at hand, and rushed on, leading their unhappy countrymen with them, headlong towards the utter ruin in which all were so soon to be involved. At such a time the fate of professing Christians was, to the outward view, singularly unhappy.

Persecuted with equal bitterness by the Pharisees, who ruled in Jerusalem, and by the Romans, who with iron hand then governed the world, the Christians stood friendless, alone, with no earthly power able or willing to protect them. And, just at this crisis, when personal violence, spoliation of property, aye, and death by fire and sword, was the frequent portion of the Christian —just at this crisis the Epistle to the Hebrews was written—this glorious Epistle, which, in the midst of a world that seemed crumbling to ruins, speaks in such triumphant tones of things that cannot be shaken, this Epistle which, while change and decay are all around, has for its one theme, the changeless Christ.

Our subject divides itself quite naturally into three lines of thought. We have the Christ of the past, the Christ of the present, and the Christ of the future: the Christ of yesterday, the Christ of to-day, the Christ of all the unknown to-morrows that are yet to be.

1. *The Christ of the past.*—Would we see the Christ of the past, how can we do so save by turning to the Gospels, where we have four matchless portraits painted for us, portraits of the Christ of yesterday—of those old yesterdays that dawned in Palestine so many years ago? What do we know of Christ in the past? What do we know of Him, let us say, in relation to those two great outstanding facts of life—sin and suffering? How did Christ deal with sin in those bygone yesterdays of His earthly life? How, but pitifully, tenderly, gently. Hating the sin as none ever hated it, He yet loved and forgave the sinner. Take some examples from the beautiful Gospel record. Here is a woman whose iniquity has been found out. What has the Law to say to her? Hard, stern, and uncompromising is the edict: 'Such should be stoned.' What said the Christ, the pure, the sinless One? 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.' And can we not picture her would-be judges as, abashed and conscience-stricken, they one by one slunk away? Then the gentle voice of love is heard once more: 'Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more.' Again we read of our Saviour that when He would pass from Judæa to Galilee, 'He must needs go through Samaria.' Do you read in that a mere geographical necessity, because Samaria lay between? If so, you greatly err. There was another way from Judæa to Galilee, the way the Jews always took; and had Jesus been like the Pharisees, He would have chosen that other way, that His holy feet might not be defiled with Samaritan dust. But Christ must needs go through Samaria that day because He had saving work to do, because there was a poor outcast woman—a sinner—waiting for Him, because in that degraded land there was a soul that was to learn to sing:

> Jesus sought me while a stranger,
> Wandering from the fold of God.

There is a man, a publican, an outcast, to the Jewish mind beyond the pale of hope, of recognition, of salvation. A sinner, yes, but Christ saw beneath the sin a soul most precious. He called to him, 'Follow me,' and Matthew the publican was changed to Matthew the Evangelist. In Palestine, the Christ of yesterday sought sinners and saved them, loved them into newness of life. Indeed, the Pharisees found in this very thing one of their chief causes of complaint against Him. 'This man,' said they, 'receiveth sinners and eateth with them.' And thus, though they knew it not, did these Pharisees—sour, vindictive men that they were—sound the very highest note in praise of Him whose name is called Jesus because He saves His people from their sins. Thus did Christ deal yesterday with the problem of the world's sin. Tenderly He received the sinner, freely He forgave the sin.

2. *The Christ of the present.*—Jesus Christ is the same to-day. After all, your life and mine is lived not in any beautiful yesterday, not in a

possible radiant to-morrow, but in the throbbing, pulsing, living present. It is now that we feel the stress and strain of life, and we cannot live altogether in the memory of past achievements, or on the hope of possible blessings to come. And it is this very fact, this tyranny of the present, that gives to the world its power over us. When worldly, it may be sinful, pleasures are offered to us to-day, we are tempted to seize these passing pleasures without waiting to count to-morrow's possible pains. In our youth the world seems to have so much to offer us; what has Christ, if we choose Him, to give? This, His own unchangeableness: 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day.' We have seen what He was yesterday; to-day He is still the loving, tender Saviour.

Are you conscious of your sin; do you feel, like the great Apostle, that when you would do good evil is present with you? If so, the Sin-pardoner, the unchanging Christ, is the Saviour for you. Are you in sorrow; is the trouble so deep that it may be you dare not whisper it in any human ear? Then come to Christ. Just how He will comfort you, none can tell; but certain it is that He has never yet failed to reveal Himself to the earnest, seeking, troubled soul.

It is neither the haunting memory of a bitter past, nor the dread of an unknown and, it may be, disastrous future, that most appals us. It is rather the monotony of to-day, to-day that so often seems 'weary, flat, stale, and unprofitable,' that unnerves us, and at times makes us faint and fail. But for to-day also we have the unchanging Christ. 'He knoweth our frame.' He understands—He who for years wrought at a carpenter's bench at Nazareth—He understands the grind and the weariness and the monotony of life, understands and sympathizes and cheers us by His love. So, as the days slowly pass and change into yesterdays, do we learn life's supreme lesson, the lesson that it is possible to walk and not to faint.

3. *The Christ of the future.*—'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' Let us plan our lives never so carefully, not the wisest here can foretell what is to happen next year, to-morrow, an hour hence. All this is written only in the book of God's foreknowledge; but of one thing we can be certain—all through life, and beyond time into eternity, we can have with us an unfailing Friend. It is an essential of true friendship that it should be permanent. Alas! how small a thing is sometimes strong enough to sever the most firmly cemented friendships of earth! A real or a fancied slight, a misunderstanding, some hasty word rashly spoken, and the friends are friends no longer. Or even though the hearts may remain faithful and true, death, the great divider, comes, and the lives are put so far apart,

They cannot hear each other speak.

Some day we discover that our friend has passed before us into the unseen, leaving an empty chair, a sacred memory of kind words spoken, of good deeds done. Such are the inevitable changes of time. Let us look away from these to the unchangeable Christ. In life, in death, eternally, He is with us, with us to comfort and to bless. The same for ever—that includes everything: our future years of life, the eternity we hope to spend in glory. Let us seek to know this perfect Friend on earth, then to us the better country which lies beyond the river of death will not be a place new or strange.

Before Bunyan's Pilgrim left the House Beautiful he was taken to the top of the house and bidden to look south, and there he saw a lovely country with hills and dales, waving woods and rivers, which country those who were with him told him was called Immanuel's land. One day, by God's great mercy, we hope to enter the Better Country; but if we have known Christ here, then that land will not be to us a country new and strange, for the unchanging Christ, the Christ not only of yesterday, and to-day, but also of that glorious unknown to-morrow, will be there to welcome us, and we shall look

Not at the Crown he gifteth,
But on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's Land.

The Christ of the Present.

Heb. xiii. 8.—'Jesus Christ is the same to-day.'

When we speak of the Christ of any age, or any time, or of any section of the Christian Church, we do not mean that we divide the body of Christ,

or that we split up the personality of Christ; we only mean that His appeal to man and to the human consciousness is so varied that no two persons ever see Him quite in the same way. Men and communities alike approach Him, as it were, from different points of view. Each of us has his own point of view, and therefore every man and every age has his or its Christ.

Thus the changeless Christ is always changing. He manifests Himself to different ages and different people in different forms. Anyone who knows anything of the history of the Christian Church knows how different Jesus Christ's appeal has been to different ages. Go for instance to some young race full of barbaric feeling, emerging perhaps out of the darkness of savagery into the first dawn of civilization, a nation which has to fight for its existence, and you will find, as with our Gothic forefathers, the chief thought of Jesus Christ is that He is a Hero God.

> Down from the shining hosts above
> With joyful haste He sped,
> Removed Himself from all He loved,
> And dwelt amongst the dead.

That is the appeal He makes to such people. Go to another age, to a philosophical age, to a philosophical city, like the city of Alexandria in the second century, and you find people who are discussing philosophy and thinking about abstract problems, and they come to Jesus Christ, and He appeals to them as the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us. They realize in Him the expression of God's thought, the Being in whom all things consist, and they find peace and quietness of mind in their philosophical meditation upon Him.

We come to our own age. What other age is like ours, when you hear the breath of the Spirit among the people in the disturbance of great democracies, in the rising of new peoples to a realization of their power? And now you will find that Christ is the labourer's Christ, the friend of the people, the Man to whom they turn because He is very often unlike His representatives. Our age will come back to Christ, by realizing that He is one with the sympathy and aspiration of all men everywhere when it is upwards and Godwards.

Our object is to try to discover what is the appeal of Jesus Christ to this present age. It is not that we worship a different Christ from the Christ of the first century, or of the fourth century, or of the Reformation time, but that this same Christ appeals to us to-day as He appealed to the men of those ages in the past, and that His appeal to us is special, peculiar to our need and to our time, one that only we can listen to and that only we can understand and appreciate. The supreme task of the Christian Church in these days is to rediscover Jesus Christ for herself. And in the same way the supreme task of the individual Christian is to listen to the word which Jesus Christ speaks, and speaks to him. Only, it is necessary that we should understand, as did the first followers of Jesus, that His activity is not over. He ever liveth, and as long as He lives He speaks. What His message is we as Christians have to inquire.

1. First, then, we must realize that Jesus Christ is still, as He was to the men who first knew Him, and to the men of the Reformation, a living Person. It is necessary in these days to lay some stress upon the fact that Jesus Christ is a living force and available for human needs. Dr. Dale tells how, once meditating an Easter sermon in his study, he was walking up and down when there suddenly flashed across his mind the conviction that Jesus Christ was alive. This conviction, he said, altered his whole horizon and changed the character of his preaching from that time onwards. It is some such experience as this that the Christian Church needs to go through.

The Christ of to-day must be One who has become part and parcel of our human environment, who is still a force, the effect of which we can feel for ourselves—a Christ who is for us not merely a memory, not merely a sacred figure with a halo round it that we can bow down before in reverence, but a power that touches us, and that we can touch, and of which we can have real and experimental knowledge.

2. But the power of Christ in this, as in every age, is due to the effect of His gospel on the development of human character. Character is the real end of all our achievement and discipline, and a man without character is a man who becomes a negligible quantity. It is no exaggeration to say that the great purpose of Jesus Christ was to produce in men this invaluable asset of character,

and His best appeal and His most needed word to the men of to-day is when His gospel, His message, is cast in this ethical form.

Now, to the man who says that he is perfect, that all is right with him, and that he does not need anything, and is happy enough as he is, we have no ground of ethical appeal. The only chance of discovering character in a man is to make him feel how low down he is, and what a great height he has to climb. That is the sense of sin. There is little or no prospect of moral advance in a man who says he is perfectly right with God, that he has no need for anxiety about his relations with God. He is among the righteous who need no repentance. But for the man who prostrates himself before his God, crying 'unclean,' there is a chance, and that man has the beginnings in him of the highest devotion and the purest life. It is this work that Jesus Christ comes to do; and if the preaching of the present day is to take any real hold, it must be preaching which will convince men of sin, and will tell comfortable, respectable people what a long road they have to travel before they can be even what they seem.

3. Then there is one other direction in which the teaching of Christ is especially applicable to the present time, and that is in regard to all those matters which we are accustomed to sum up under the wide term 'social.' This is an age when the social side of human life has come to the front as perhaps never in the past. The familiar expression, 'We are all socialists now,' has very considerable truth behind it. We are all learning to look at things from the social point of view. We have to learn the lesson of the solidarity of the human race and of society. Everything is now seen from the standpoint of society; and the problem that faces the most thoughtful people at the present time is the social problem—the problem of what is to become of men and women in this complex and fearful machine we call modern society.

Now, Jesus Christ has a special message on those lines to the present age; and the solution of these problems that vex us so much, and on which we spend so many hours of study, is not likely to be found along any other road than the road of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Saviour of the world. And it will come about in two ways.

(1) First there must be the discovery that underneath what is called the social problem there is a moral and spiritual problem. That is the point that Jesus Christ insists upon. Men come to Him maimed, palsied, and helpless human beings, and He says to them all, 'Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.' That comes first. And our social reformers must learn to take things in their proper order. Many of them by this time are tired of tinkering with the outside. Those who have ever tried to regenerate a sunken human being, some miserable drunkard or wastrel, know what this means. They put him into a clean house and into clean clothes and give him a fresh job, and they know, to their sorrow what the end of it is. The work goes on over and over again, until they are sick, and weary, and in despair. What is needed is a new man as well as a new environment; and the thing Jesus Christ is insisting upon with every one who listens to His word is that we must begin with the new man first, and be radical in our treatment of the problem, if we are to make any change.

(2) It is obvious, however, that if Christ is to appeal to the present age in such fashion as we have indicated, and to do for men that which they most need to have done, He must be approached by them as One who has the necessary authority and power. The sign and title of this they may find not only in the story of Him as told in the New Testament, but in the long history of His influence in the hearts and lives of His followers. He speaks to-day even with an added authority, because signs have followed to confirm the word. In the power of the Word made flesh, and of the Word reincarnated in the lives of men, we find to-day the connecting link between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.

¶ Before I went to Switzerland, a friend told me how ardently he wished he could go and feel over again the thrill that came to him when first he saw the Bernese Alps. I gathered that his second, third, and succeeding visits had fallen comparatively flat, or at least that they had never risen to the scale of his original joy. For the moment, I accepted the further inference that a second impression of the snow mountains can never be quite a success for anybody. On reflection I became convinced it was not necessarily so. There was something wrong with my friend. Let it be granted that the violent change, say, from East London

to Interlaken, produces a thrill altogether unique in its excellence. A second thrill may not be so powerful, but it need not be less sublime. No man sensitive to the vision of the beautiful can gaze upon the splendours of the Jungfrau without being drawn out and enriched. He is bound to be a different, and in certain respects a better, man. His soul is enlarged; his perceptive faculties are clarified; his capacity for enjoyment is increased. When next he goes to see the Alps he will carry something with him he did not possess before. Hence, he will see more, and see more deeply. And each new wonder will thrill him and educate him.

So with the soul and Christ. The early disciples felt the thrill of the new wonder that had come into their lives on the day of the Lord's resurrection. They were thrilled again at Pentecost, and again and yet again as they lived and moved and had their being in the Spirit. We, too, recall the thrill of our own new birth, 'at the cross, where we first saw the light'! There is something wrong with our religion if we have not been thrilled again and again since then. 'Jesus Christ is the same,' and yet not the same. To those who love and follow Him He unveils more and more of His beauty. We bring a heightened capacity; He gives a heightened revelation.[1]

Christ the Pioneer.

Heb. xiii. 8.—'Jesus Christ the same . . . to-day.'

The writer has been leading us over a very wonderful road, which is trodden by pilgrims of faith. Every one of the pilgrims is radiant with victory. Every one is distinguished by some exploit. Every one is carrying the palm of a great venture. When that road fades out of our eyes, and all its shining company with it, and we wake to reality as from a beautiful dream, when we find ourselves back on our own road—so drab, so heavy, so difficult, so unromantic—how then? What has this man who has been taking us over the romantic road of faith to say to the men and women of to-day? He has this to say, 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever!' Jesus Christ, the same to-day! The old Leader is on the new road. There is no wasting of His resources. There is no drought among the springs of grace. He is still honouring faith by fellowship and power. He acknowledges no mastery in hostile circumstances. He pays no homage to hoary iniquities. He offers the inexhaustible fountains of His own virtue and strength. He answers faith with grace. He crowns venture with triumph. He links the exploits of the fathers to the exploits of their children. Jesus Christ the same to-day.

¶ As Napoleon put it, 'When I was in my prime I could get thousands to follow me, but I had to be *there*.' It is the personal touch that does it.[1]

Christ is not an anachronism. The passing of the centuries does not leave Him far behind. He keeps pace with the most startling and unexpected challenge. Nay, the promise of the Word is even more than this; He not only keeps level with things, He goes before. He is always in front of the age. 'With the cross of Jesus going on before!'

What is the challenge of to-day? And how does Jesus Christ meet it? What do we see?

1. We see a great and contagious awakening of the democratic spirit. The workman is asserting the dignity of his life, and he is proclaiming the royal prerogatives of manual toil. He is breaking up that heavy, unillumined, contemptuous word, 'masses,' and he is showing that behind the huddled term there are fine instincts, and large capacities, and noble passions. Has Christ anything for democracy?

(1) When He came among us to reveal the life and character of God, He housed His holy body in the narrow circle of a working-man. In his boyhood He donned the workman's apron, and for thirty years, in a little market town, He served His fellows as the village carpenter. He knew the workman's lot, and if He be now alive how can labour be to Him other than something noble and venerable.

(2) When He emerged from the workshop to establish His Kingdom He sought the nucleus of the fellowship among the working men. He chose twelve men, and He found the majority of them among the working class. And in the long run He made out of these workmen brave knights who could dare to challenge kings, and who could

[1] J. S. Reece.

[1] J. Reid, *The Victory of God*, 158.

march as to a wedding to face the menace of death.

(3) And now examine His teachings. All His basal principles breathe the democratic spirit. His teaching spurns the established boundaries. Take any of the larger teachings and mark the amplitude of their range—all races and peoples are of equal sacredness; character is more important than talent; responsibility is measured according to endowment; neighbourliness is to be defined by the circle of necessity and not by the limitations of race; the success of life is to be measured by its secret fidelities and not by its popular triumphs. And if you would have the consummation of democratic expression, take this pregnant word of our Lord: 'One is your Master, and all ye are brethren.' Christ is the first and the greatest of all democrats, and if ours is the age when democracy is awaking, Christ is its anointed Leader and Pioneer.

2. There is the challenge of men who are seeking a richer material inheritance. Men and women are everywhere reaching out for more of the life and comfort which can be found in material things. Do you wonder that the miner's hands are stretched out for more human comforts and for a larger share in the fullness of God's bountiful world? It is even so with the docker. And it is even so with the factory operative.

How fares it with Christ in this demand? What is He doing? He is seeking life and joy for everybody. On one side He is opening out life's possibilities, unveiling capacities which He wants all men to possess and exercise. It is altogether incongruous to imagine Christ contented that a man's life should be like a caged bird, or like some bleached and anæmic plant in a sunless cellar. The aim of Christ is a man made whole, liberated to his full capacity in body, mind and soul. 'He shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water.' Let us fix the contrast in mind, the contrast between a nobly proportioned tree and a man denied his full development.

> Then Christ sought out an artisan,
> A low-browed, stunted, haggard man,
> And a motherless girl, whose fingers thin
> Pushed from her faintly want and sin.
>
> These set He in the midst of them,
> And as they drew back their garment-hem
> For fear of defilement, 'Lo, here,' said He,
> 'The images ye have made of Me!'

3. There are necessities of deeper import, and if these are ignored or unreached a man can never find his destined freedom. You may enrich a man as you please with material advantage, but after all the man is in bonds. Is Christ up-to-date here? Can He deal with this imperious necessity? Deal with what? He can deal with sin, sin which lurks in the heart of a workman, and sin that hides in the heart of a peer. Sin? That is not a modern term. No, but it is a modern thing. Sin seems a troublesome word. Or it seems to be an obsolete word, about as insignificant as the word *selah,* and it is given no place in the busy vital currency of our modern terminology.

But when any man, miner or peer, goes quietly and alone to the deep waters of his own soul, and gazes into their depths, he sees something which is very real and which is the enemy of his peace. He knows when his inner life is dislocated. He knows when a crooked thing wriggles through his soul. He knows when he defies God.

Can Christ deal with this necessity? Can He cleanse the springs of passion? Yes, indeed He can. Can he change the climate of a temperament? Can he take a vagrant soul and bring it to its home in God? Yes, indeed He can. Jesus can give a man freedom where alone freedom has her royal seat. Christ's freedom is freedom which means spiritual power. It is freedom which means moral force. Christ creates within a man a secret wealth of vitality which is like a well of water springing up into everlasting life, and in the amplitude of His moral resources all things become possible unto Him.

Christ is, then, the greatest of all democrats, far ahead of the boldest of all. He is the Pioneer in all human enlargement, with a programme bigger than all. And He is the incomparable Emancipator, descending into depths of secret bondage where no one else can follow. 'Jesus Christ the same . . . to-day.'

The Christ of the Future.

Heb. xiii. 8.—'Jesus Christ the same . . . for ever.'

1. Jesus Christ is the same for ever in *the unique perfection of His character.* Christians

have always claimed for their Master that He is supremely good, and that He is the last word in holiness of life and character. Age after age has been directed to the Gospels, with the challenge, 'Show us the point where He falls short.' '*Ecce homo!* Behold the man'! The centre of gravity in the fact of Christ for sinful men is not, after all, that He is perfectly holy, but that He loves them and is mighty to save. But that power to save depends, in the last analysis, upon His own perfect goodness. If He is fallible in this, He is fallible in all. Amid all our changes there is one change which has not come and is not coming. Mankind has discovered no rival to the moral supremacy of Jesus Christ. All honest and sincere men are still ready, unless they are the victims of inveterate prejudice, to acknowledge this, that in all the world's yesterday and to-day there is one thing that remains unchallenged—the absolute uniqueness of the moral and spiritual beauty of the Christ of the Gospels. To-day He is the same—the one perfect flower of human holiness that has ever blossomed in the soil of this sinful earth; and still to think of goodness is to think of Christ. There is, there can be, no other standard of goodness beside Him.

2. Jesus Christ is the same for ever in *His power to meet the deepest human needs.* There is one thing which is apparent to everyone who thoughtfully considers our changeful human conditions; it is that, however greatly man may vary superficially from age to age, potentially, at least, in all that goes to make his manhood he remains fundamentally the same.

> Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity;
> These are its sign and note and character.[1]

Man is always the same in his need of God, in his need of forgiveness, in his need of spiritual aid to conquer sin, in his need of the life eternal. Without these things he would be merely a clever animal, not, as he is, a spiritual being capable of fellowship with the Father of Spirits. And just because Christ brings these great gifts, and men have discovered none other who can give them as He gives them, He remains to men through all time what He was to those who first received Him—the One Source of really sufficient satisfaction for their deepest needs.

3. Jesus Christ is the same for ever in *His ability to transform and redeem human lives.* Verification is the keynote of modern religious thought; and we could wish no better foundation upon which to rest our faith in Christ than this—His unfailing power to prove Himself true in the experience of those who make trial of His offer of grace to help in time of need. It would be difficult not to regard the New Testament as a spiritual romance, if it did not find its counterpart and continuation in the world to-day. The deepest test of Christ is neither the literary examination of the records of His life on earth nor the critical co-ordination of the historical elements of the witness borne to Him by His earliest disciples. It is rather the continuous putting to the proof of His redeeming power in the lives of men and women convicted of their need of Him. The finding in actual life that 'He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.'

To those who read the words translated 'for ever' in their original form, 'unto the ages,' they would have a further suggestion. They were accustomed to look on God's purpose in the universe as unfolding itself in a series of æons or dispensations. It had been so in the history of this world; they themselves were living in the end of one dispensation; the old world passing away, a new world, another age, was immediately commencing. St. Paul speaks of worlds and epochs, of which we now know nothing, that are all to be gathered together, and fulfilled in Christ. An amazing prospect thus seemed to be unfolding itself before them. As our earth forms part of a solar system, and this system, again, of a stellar world; and many stellar worlds, impassable to one another, yet all connected by the central force, revolve around the throne of the Invisible; so might the history of man, with its varying epochs, be included in another dispensation, itself but one of many æons, all evolving one thought, one eternal purpose of God. In the world to come there may be further dispensations, each fulfilling a thought, and all illustrating the mighty being, of God. Here are changes, grand, stupendous, unimaginable. But in the midst of all is seen one

[1] R. Browning *Paracelsus*, iii.

unchanging Christ. Let dispensation succeed dispensation, and age follow age, and the æons of the æons still open up, and broaden out, and deepen on, and lengthen themselves immeasurably, inconceivably; Jesus Christ is 'the same unto the ages.' New they will be, but they will not be strange; the changes will but illustrate the unchangeable. He who trod this earth a child; who toiled and suffered here a man; the Saviour who wept, and struggled, and prayed; the Christ who died on Calvary; the Lord who won you to Himself, and reconciled you to God, who comforted you, and taught you, and preserved you faithful; the Jesus of humanity; the Christ consecrated and sent into the world to sanctify us to God; He who is the same in the 'yesterday and to-day' of this weak, erring, but, since He fills it, this blessed life, He is 'the same unto the ages.'

I stay myself on Him who stays
Ever the same through nights and days:
The One Unchangeable for aye,
That was and will be: the one Stay.

O'er whom Eternity will pass
But as an image in a glass;
To whom a million years are nought,
I stay myself on a great Thought.

I stay myself on the great Quiet
After the noises and the riot;
As in a garnished chamber sit
Far from the tumult of the street.

Oh, wheel of Time, turn round apace!
But I have found a resting-place.
You will not trouble me again
In the great peace where I attain.[1]

The Christian Altar.

Heb. xiii. 10.—'We have an altar.'

We realize our unity with the earliest Christians more clearly, perhaps, as we approach in our reading the closing words of each Epistle. In the earlier chapters a piece of local Christian history, or a fragment of a passing controversy, seems to fill the writer's thoughts; and we modern readers have to bring a student's mind to bear upon his words before we can win for our own souls the great lessons for which we look; but as the writer approaches his final greetings to those whom he addresses, the case is otherwise. His thoughts take a wider sweep in time and circumstance. He still has an eye for the local and temporal troubles of those to whom he writes, but his answer to them takes another form, and he states with tremendous force some great principle which is as valuable in the twentieth century as it was in the first. So at the end of the Epistle to the Galatians St. Paul dismisses the Judaistic controversy with the deathless words, 'For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.' So, too, at the end of the Epistle to the Hebrews the disciple of St. Paul sums up his teaching with a universal truth and a universal invitation. 'We have an altar . . . Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually.'

1. We shall feel the force of these simple words better if we look back to the earlier chapters which form their context. We shall find that our text was from the first a living oracle giving an answer to men involved in sore distress and distracting doubt. When the Epistle was written the Jewish Christians had become fully awake to the difficulties of their own position. They were Jews by race; nothing could alter that. They were, moreover, of the people of Abraham and of Moses and of David, they were the heirs of a special revelation from God; this, again, was a great historic fact, which no change of circumstance without, or of heart within, could alter. Thus the Jews who had accepted Jesus as Messiah and Saviour were still Jews, not only by race, but also in a real sense by religion.

Now the fellowship of the Jews among themselves was a goodly fellowship. It had both national and religious sanction. Moreover, it had moral force. Jewish nationality was as great a power as Roman citizenship. To belong to the synagogue was to have the privilege of membership in a wide-reaching and effective brotherhood. To feed the living and bury the dead of their own people was an instinct in the Hebrew race. The Jew was in a true sense a brother to the Jew. The hard pressure of Gentile scorn and Gentile oppression cemented the bond from without; the attraction of one sacred house, one sacred book, and one Divine name cemented it from within. There was in the whole world no

[1] Katharine Tynan, *The Flying Wheel*.

brotherhood to be compared with that which the followers of Moses possessed. It offered a haven to the persecuted and wandering Jew, which almost meant salvation to him. No greater blow —save death—could fall upon the Jew than to be put out of the synagogue.

Yet this was just the blow which was threatening to fall upon those Hebrews to whom the Epistle was written. It is impossible for two to walk together except they be agreed, and the Christian Jew found at last that it was impossible for him to agree with his unconverted brother. Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Messiah, said one; Jesus is anathema, said the other (1 Cor. xii. 3). The bond of brotherhood was broken. The Christians, the minority, must go. The shelter of the Jewish name could no longer be theirs if they persisted in calling upon Jesus as Lord.

2. Against the threatened loss of so great a fellowship the writer of the Epistle offers participation in a new fellowship in these words, 'We have an altar.' What is this Christian altar? The author doubtless meant by it the Cross with Christ upon it. So Thomas Aquinas writes: 'This altar is either the Cross of Christ on which He was sacrificed for us, or Christ Himself in whom and through whom we offer our prayers.' Thus the writer of the Epistle points his readers to a spiritual altar which presented itself to men as the means of a fellowship greater than any the world had yet known.

The Jewish altar had been an effectual sign of fellowship. In the days of our Lord's ministry the one altar in the one Temple at Jerusalem was still a bond of union. There at the offering of the same sacrifices the conservative Jew of Judæa met with the liberal Jew of Gentile lands. There the Pharisee who affirmed the resurrection stood by the side of the Sadducee who denied it, and the temporizing Herodian came face to face with the revolutionary zealot. The possession of this one altar kept the peace between Jew and Jew, and so put off the final tragedy of Jerusalem for more than a generation.

3. Union, or fellowship, then, is the main thought with the author of the Epistle when he puts forward so prominently the truth that Christians have an altar. Christian fellowship is the keynote of this thirteenth chapter. It opens with the exhortation, 'Let love of the brethren continue'; it goes on to press the claims of fellowship on behalf of strangers, travelling Christians, Christians in prison, Christian leaders past and present, and finally on behalf of the author himself. The poor are not forgotten: 'To do good and to communicate forget not.' All readers are called upon to join in one fellowship of worship through Christ, the spiritual altar: 'Through Him, then, let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually.'

But the spiritual Christian altar is utterly different from the altar of the Jewish Temple. How, then, is it intended to establish a like—nay, a greater—fellowship? The remaining words of v. 10 supply the answer: 'We have an altar, of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle.' Christians, then, eat of their altar; the heavenly food of a spiritual sacrifice is communicated to those who worship there. The thought would be difficult to grasp if our Lord Himself had not made it plain with a luminous paradox, 'He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.'

4. How greatly in practice this fellowship is broken up. A worldly critic would declare that we Christians have not one altar, but several, each fenced to those who approach with defenders who propound a shibboleth of their own. The altar should be a symbol and a means of union; it is sometimes made obtrusively the reverse. The disease which has brought about this state of things is deep-seated, and the remedy to be applied must be one which strikes deep. There is no ready-made formula for such a case. External measures can do but little, a spirit of refreshing, for which we ought to pray, must come upon us from the Lord before we are able to make up the wide breaches which gape in the wall of our Christian charity. But we may at least begin with ourselves, and realize with penitence our own defects of charity. We are divided even as we partake of the one spiritual bread. Is it not time that we made up our minds to banish our discussions from the sanctuary to the study? Let theologians discuss, but let the children first be fed.

Pray God to keep thee from a narrow soul,
And its dear mate, a controversial mind:

Of all the things that melt, subdue, console,
Lo, these have tossed the heart upon the wind:
They feed on husks, and go content and fed,
And gather dust to make the living bread.[1]

Let us seek, then, a closer communion with our Lord, let us be willing to lose in controversy, if we may thereby gain in fellowship. There is no end to theological disputes, but in Jesus Christ all contradictions are reconciled. We have an altar; God grant that we be reconciled at it, and become all one man in Christ Jesus!

No Compromise.

Heb. xiii. 13.—'Let us go forth unto him without the camp.'

The main lesson of this verse is that the time for compromise between Christianity and Judaism is over, that henceforth Christ must be, without reserve, all in all, and the Christian's attitude towards Judaism must be that of no compromise. We are not to-day in much danger of desiring to compromise with Judaism; but if Judaism—an inspired religion and a bond of nationality—was to be treated in this way, there can be little doubt as to the form the appeal should assume as it rings through our own consciences. We must prefer union with Christ to anything which city or camp may offer us, esteeming His reproach 'greater riches than the treasures in Egypt,' separating ourselves from everything in the worldly system of things that tends to separate us from our Lord. To some men it may not be very palatable counsel, but it is none the less authoritative. From the world in its evil forms and influences we must resolutely go forth to our Saviour, refusing to compromise in regard to anything in religious truth or duty that is essential, and above all in regard to anything that is sinful in ourselves.

1. Let us look at some of the applications of this law of no compromise. Apply it, first of all, to matters of religious truth. It implies not bigotry of any kind or degree, but complete loyalty to our own convictions, with the full recognition of other people's equal right to theirs. Sir James Stephen once described truth as 'the foe of falsehood, the antagonist of error, the exorcist of ambiguity'; and no man can afford to trifle with anything that answers such a description. Whatever is truth to a man ought to be sacred to him, commanding his unfaltering allegiance. If that is the case with ordinary truths, how much more certainly is it so in regard to those upon which religion is based, and by whose influence it is nourished! To ignore, renounce, or compromise religious convictions, truths about God or holiness which are known to bear directly upon religious experience and progress, for the sake of comfort or even for the sake of external ecclesiastical union, is clearly a policy of weakness, from which no good results for ourselves or for others can reasonably be expected. 'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind,' and 'In understanding be men,' are the twin counsels of an Apostle who was ready enough to recognize every claim that others could make upon him, but who was so unwilling to dilute or pervert the gospel of Christ that he once said with some emphasis, 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema.'

2. In practical matters of business, recreation, social life, the application of this law is perhaps even more frequently neglected, as it is certainly sometimes more difficult. For in many natures there seems to be a strong tendency to do as others do; and even in regard to doubtful things in business or in amusement a well-meaning man may occasionally be heard pleading that we must do as others do. If a man had neither intelligence nor sense of right, it might be possible to understand the necessity. But to imagine a man with a mind of his own and a conscience of his own allowing his practice and friendships and personal habits to be determined by the opinions or the ways of other men—the imagination seems hardly capable of such an effort! Yet the cases are so frequent that a close observer of life once pronounced 'sliding into the pleasureless yielding to the small solicitations of circumstance a commoner history of perdition than any single momentous bargain.' It is a fatal course in any form, alike to peace and to anything like ripe experience in religion, and tends indeed to discredit even religion itself. Concerning, for instance, that large class of amusements in regard to which the Christian conscience is not altogether

[1] F. Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 19.

easy, a worldly man will sometimes try to entangle us in them by pleading that there is nothing wrong in them; and then, if he succeeds, will sneer with half-contemptuous pity at our weakness in yielding to him, and at the weakness of what we call our religion. He at least knows that both the atmosphere and the example are wrong—the former full of excitement and danger, the latter apt to beguile the young and unwary—and that it is a safe ethical rule not to play with fire. Christian morality goes even a step further by teaching that a thing may be actually right in itself and yet not right for us, if our indulgence in it would involve a breach of the law of charity, and imperil any soul for which Christ died. So with the question of personal intimacies. There are cases where the authority of Christ warrants us not to cherish resentment or to break out into needless passion, but to count a man as 'a heathen man and a publican'; and there are cases concerning which St. Paul asks the natural question, 'What fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? . . . And what concord hath Christ with Belial?' For the social unity at which Christianity subordinately aims is to be a unity by comprehension, when all men will be one because every man has consented in his heart to be wrapped in the embrace of the common Saviour. Union by compromise, on the other hand, is alien to the whole spirit of the New Testament, which in more than one way points to whatever in man or in practice is sinful, and says imperially, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate.'

3. But there is one province in which this law of no compromise must receive even more stern and persistent application. For the greatest hindrance to the progress of the Christian lies, after all, in himself; and not until his evil self has been annihilated will the object of religious discipline be reached, or the righteousness of the spirit become complete. This evil self—what Solomon, in his great prayer (1 Kings viii. 38), called the plague of a man's own heart—everyone probably would acknowledge that it gives him more trouble than anything else in the form of some ill temper, or of some seemingly almost unconquerable besetment. Discontent or petulance, jealousy or resentment, indolence or habit of waste, or some other foul passion or hampering vice, now and then suppressed for a moment, quickly break out again and refuse to be slain, so that the most difficult and the most indispensable business every man has to do is to crucify the old self, 'with the affections and lusts.' The kind of life we long for, on the other hand, is not merely in occasional rapture to throw ourselves at God's feet, but to live there in unceasing devotion, to have the whole self transformed, and sin and weakness replaced by virtue and strength and the whole company of the graces of the Spirit. How can we manage it?

(1) The first necessity is the utmost possible severity in dealing with sin in ourselves. The tendency to make excuse, or to deal leniently, or to subdue sin by degrees and master the evil self in detail—we must reserve all that for use in our connection with other men; but the man who trifles with sin in himself, and tries to ease his conscience with compromises, simply dooms himself to peacelessness and failure. Bunyan tells that, when Christian saw Apollyon before him 'bestraddling the pathway,' he did not begin to propose conditions of amity and alliance, but immediately in the name of God 'felt for his sword.' For ourselves also that is the only road to success against sin—not to play with it, trying to find out how far we can go without fatally grieving God, but to refuse to give it any quarter at all.

(2) Thus consistently and completely to apply this law of no compromise cannot be effected by the action of the human will alone; but it can easily be done by the power arising from the inspiration of Jesus and from His constant presence with us. The reproach that may follow is not at the present day of a serious character; for it is difficult to suppose that a man of any sincerity cares much about what he is unjustly called. There is a passage, indeed, in one of the Epistles of St. Peter which suggests that such a reproach is, in the economy of grace, itself transformed into a source of strength and righteousness: 'If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye; because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you.' If that be so, if firmness against sin brings down upon us in glory the Almighty Spirit of God, the refusal to compromise is worth all the pain it may cost, and is irresistible and certain in its sanctifying results. Separating ourselves from the sins that trouble us, and binding ourselves to Christ in unlimited devotion, those

sins will not be able to follow us into our condition of fellowship with Him. 'When Satan cometh,' the shadow of the Cross will bar his approach; and out of our hearts will disappear, slowly it may be, but certainly, everything to which sin could appeal.

Grant us the will to fashion as we feel,
Grant us the strength to labour as we know,
Grant us the purpose, ribbed and edged with steel,
To strike the blow.[1]

4. Let us look at some modern examples. In his Life of John Bright, Mr G. M. Trevelyan says: 'His success in the House was not obtained by flattery or by compromise. At a League banquet held at the Crown and Anchor in honour of the Durham election on the night after he had taken his seat, he described his first impressions of the scene upon which he was entering, in language prophetic of the part he was destined to play there during the next quarter of a century. 'Going into the House last night,' he said, 'the caution lately given me by a poor but honest Scotchman struck me. He said to me, "Mr. Bright, I'll give you a piece of advice. You are going into bad company; and now that you are in, remember that you stick to what you said when you were out."'[2]

Now look at the working of compromise in its most promising environment, and described by a sympathetic biographer. This is from Professor J. H. Rose's *Personality of Napoleon:* 'His policy in its better days embodies the spirit of compromise and gives it fixed and abiding expression. His thoughts on men and politics therefore take a middle flight, strong and unwavering, near the earth, and rarely soaring aloft. But they possess, what is rare among the champions of compromise, unfailing vigour. Too often the spirit of compromise embodies itself in flabby creatures like Mr. Brooke in "Middlemarch," who always found that much was to be said for both sides. In Napoleon the genius of compromise shone forth radiant, forceful, triumphant. As a political thinker he is the lineal descendant of Henri IV. and Mirabeau. Take these words, uttered in August 1800, as a clear statement of reasonable opportunism: "My policy consists in governing men as the greatest number wish to be governed. That, I think, is the way of recognizing the sovereignty of the people. By becoming a Catholic I have ended the Vendéan War; by becoming a Moslem I gained a footing in Egypt; by becoming Ultramontane I won over public opinion in Italy. If I governed Jews, I would rebuild the temple of Solomon. So, too, I will talk of liberty in the free part of San Domingo; I will retain slavery in the Isle of France (Mauritius), even in the unfree part of San Domingo, always with the intention of limiting and softening slavery where I retain it, and of restoring order and introducing discipline where I maintain liberty."'[1]

Contrast with Browning: 'If there be any concrete form of evil,' says Sir Henry Jones, 'with which the poet's optimism is not able to cope, any irretrievable black "beyond white's power to disintensify," it is the refusal to take a definite and resolute stand for either virtue or vice; the hesitancy and compromise of a life that is loyal to nothing, not even to its own selfishness. The cool self-love of the old English moralists, which "reduced the game of life to principles," and weighed good and evil in the scales of prudence, is to our poet the deepest damnation.

St. Eldobert—I much approve his mode;
With sinner Vertgalant I sympathize;
But histrionic Sganarelle, who prompts
While pulling back, refuses yet concedes—
. . . . . .
Surely, one should bid pack that mountebank!

In him, even,

Thickheads ought to recognize
The Devil, that old stager, at his trick
Of general utility, who leads
Downward, perhaps, but fiddles all the way!

It is the same respect for strenuous action and dislike of compromise, that inspired the pathetic lines in which he condemns the Lost Leader, who broke "From the van and the free-men, and sunk to the rear and the slaves"; for the good pursues its work without him.

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;

[1] John Drinkwater, *Poems of Men and Hours*, 1.
[2] G. M. Trevelyan, *The Life of John Bright*, 116.
[1] J. H. Rose, *The Personality of Napoleon*, 192.

Deeds will be done,—while life boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire :
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devil's triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!' [1]

The Sacrifice of Praise.

Heb. xiii. 15.—'By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.'

Much attention is given now to the study of comparative religion. The beliefs and observances of the rudest tribes are narrowly scrutinized, in order to discover the underlying ideas. And many a practice which seems to be trivial, absurd, or sanguinary is found to have its foundation in some noble and profound thought. But, singularly enough, the very people who are so interested in the *rationale* of the rights of savages will turn away when anybody applies a similar process to the ritual of the Jews.

Now this Epistle to the Hebrews translates altar, ritual festivals, priests, into thoughts; and it declares that Jesus Christ is the only adequate and abiding embodiment of these thoughts. We are not dressing Christian truth in a foreign garb when we express the substance of its revelation in language borrowed from the ritualistic system that preceded it. But we are extricating truths, which the world needs to-day as much as ever it did, from the form in which they were embodied for one stage of religion, when we translate them into their Christian equivalents.

So the writer here has been speaking about Christ as, by His death, sanctifying His people. And on that great thought, that He is what all priesthood symbolizes, and what all sacrifices reach out towards, he builds this grand exhortation of our text, which is at once a lofty conception of what the Christian life ought to be, and a directory as to the method by which it may become so. 'By him let us offer sacrifices continually, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.'

This sacrifice he calls the sacrifice of praise. Now the sacrifice of praise is not the mere natural expression of joy. The word carries a red stain. Praise in a world like this, and from creatures such as we are, must often be sacrificial if it is to be continual. Continued thanksgiving carried through a life of faith is a sacrifice which may be laid upon the altar where the Perfect Oblation was offered up for the sins of the whole world.

When the father of Principal Cairns died, after protracted suffering, there was a short pause till each of the family circle had realized what had happened. Then the mother in a broken voice asked that 'the books' might be laid on the table, and gave out the verse—

The storm is changed into a calm
At His command and will;
So that the waves that raged before
Now quiet are and still.

It was her voice that raised the tune. Then she asked her eldest son to read a chapter of the Bible, and afterwards to pray. When they knelt down the son made a strong effort to steady his voice, but failed utterly, and 'the dear mother herself lifted up the voice of thanksgiving for the victory that had been won.' That was the sacrifice of praise.

1. To understand the words fully we turn to the place where they are used. 'We have an altar,' says the Apostle. That Altar is Christ upon His Cross. It is an Altar whereof those who remain in Judaism and serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. But what is denied to them is the privilege of Christian believers. They feast upon the sacrifice. 'He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.' Christ for us becomes Christ in us. By eating of the sacrifice the supernatural life is sustained, and the years are turned into one long thanksgiving. Our Altar stood without the gate of Jerusalem. 'The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.' The writer remembers that the sacrifice offered on the Day of Atonement, the sacrifice that professed to take away the sins of the nation, was burned outside the camp, and consumed by fire. The priests did not partake of it. So Christ, who

[1] H. Jones, *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, 107, 110.

did in fullness what the ancient sacrifice did in symbol, Christ of whom His people do partake, was cast out of Jerusalem. Being there, He beckons us to His side. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. Even as the Christian Church of those days was cast out of the Jewish Synagogue, so the Christian Church is to be separated from the world that it may be united to Him. So then, being outside the gate, and exiles by the Christian Altar, we are to offer up our sacrifice, not the sacrifice of propitiation, but the sacrifice of praise. It is a sacrifice, seeing that it has to be offered continually. It is also a sacrifice, seeing that it is the fruit of lips that make confession of His name.

2. We are out then in Calvary, the place of death. Calvary is the old Latin translation of Golgotha, and its use in the Bible reminds us that those who brought the gospel here read the story in the Latin tongue, and thus made the name of Calvary as familiar as it is sacred. But the Jewish name was Golgotha, 'the place of a skull.' It was the haunt of death, where bones of criminals and skulls of men lay together in all their uncleanness. It was the burning place of sin, outside the frontiers of the realm of life. It was a place of shame, of tumult and jeering and insult and agony. It was there that Christ bore the last and the bitterest of the reproaches that broke His heart. But if it was a place of shame, it was a place of glory, for there stood the Christian Altar. The presence of that transfigured everything. It made Golgotha without the camp a spot where loss and gain changed places, where the true measure of things, the measure that baffled human reason, was finally fixed, where to be weary was to rest, to be defeated was to conquer to die was to live. To be in refuge at the Cross is to learn that poverty may be better than riches, and sorrow than joy, and shame than honour, and failure than success. At the Cross the significance of tribulation discloses itself, and we begin to understand what Ignatius meant when he said, 'I am God's wheat, and I cannot be fit for my Master's board till I have been ground by the teeth of lions.'

3. To offer the sacrifice of praise, then, is to bless the Lord at *all* times, to give thanks in everything, to make the mornings, noons, and midnights of life one Eucharist. How different is the sacrifice of praise from the mere exultation of youth! Youth, with its profuse illusions, demands happiness as its right, and, even if it recognizes God as the giver of joy, turns away from Him when the shadow falls. Youth demands victory, and cannot wait. It grows weary in a long and losing fight. But if we have learned to offer the sacrifice of praise upon the Altar, we need not covet youth. God has provided some better thing for us. We know it even when we see ourselves grey-haired and wrinkled in the mirror, and feel that the battle is as much as ever we can fight, and the race as much as ever we can run. We have learned to give thanks as the tide of battle rolls this way and that. The inner life wells up as the outer sinks into the ground. There is within us something better than the light-heartedness of youth, a joy, a buoyancy, a confidence which the world cannot give and cannot take away. We have learned to drink in the sunlight when exposed to it, and give back that light in the brightness of the night. To offer the sacrifice of praise is to give thanks, as the Lord gave thanks when He took the bread and blessed and brake it. He gave thanks for the wayfaring behind and the Cross before.

¶ What else can I do, a lame old man, but sing hymns to God? If I were a nightingale, I would do the part of a nightingale. If I were a swan, I would do like a swan. But now I am a rational creature and I ought to praise God. This is my work and I don't, nor will I, desert my post so long as I am allowed to keep it. And I exhort you to join in this same song.[1]

George Eliot speaks of an 'unembittered resignation to the inevitable' as the supreme wisdom in life. It is worldly wisdom. Resignation in this sense is simply the economy of force. It is the recognition of the fact that it is of no use to beat against bars. But it does not mean release from the curse of self. It does not mean a loving submission even to that which is pregnant with anguish. There is a passionlessness which strong souls have taught themselves, a stoicism that does not waste itself in vain resistance. But that stoicism hardens the spirit and often ends in a

[1] Epictetus.

cold, cruel, rigid apathy. The true release from passion is the result, not of indifference, but of inspiration. It comes to the soul that has stood by the Altar without the gate and eaten of the sacrifice, the soul that at Calvary has learned what sacrifice means. Beholding how the iron entered into the Saviour's soul, and how He trusted in God even when, from the watch-tower of His Cross, He saw all Israel scattered in the cloudy and dark day, the heart learns to trust too; and to trust is to praise. Sometimes we may see the meaning of our agony even at the moment when the pressure of pain is sharpest. Even when we do not, even when God's riddle is very hard to read, by faith we offer the sacrifice of praise, no less acceptable because it is a sacrifice. We know that the Father has sanctioned the very blow we find it so hard to bear. By faith we are able to give thanks on our Calvary, in the misery of lonely tears, watching by the dearest asleep in their last sleep. To say *Magnificat anima mea* then is to be under the benediction of the Cross, to offer in very truth the sacrifice of praise.

Dimly I knew Him, oftentimes had tried
To walk with Him, though still my stumbling feet
Wavered and halted, could not keep the beat
Of heavenly footsteps, while the world ran wide
Such streams of love and pleasure at my side.

But when the blow fell, when the earth grew cold
For one dear presence, and some spake of Thee,
Questioned Thy chastening (Lord, the misery
Was mine, not theirs!), then 'twas my Friend of old,
Whose love they doubted, growing over-bold:

And so they hurt me; dearest Lord, 'twas Thou
Didst do this thing, turned in one awful day
My life to weeping. Thou, my Friend! I say
My Friend can do no wrong, albeit how
This deed was love, I comprehend not now.

But this, with trembling heart, I comprehend,
Since it seemed good to Thee, and Thou didst know
It was no slight, ephemeral, passing woe
That earth could salve or heal, then to some end
Of love Thy purpose moves, I trust my Friend![1]

[1] M. E. George, *The Garden of Comfort*, 18.

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